

M^r PERKINS OF NEW JERSEY



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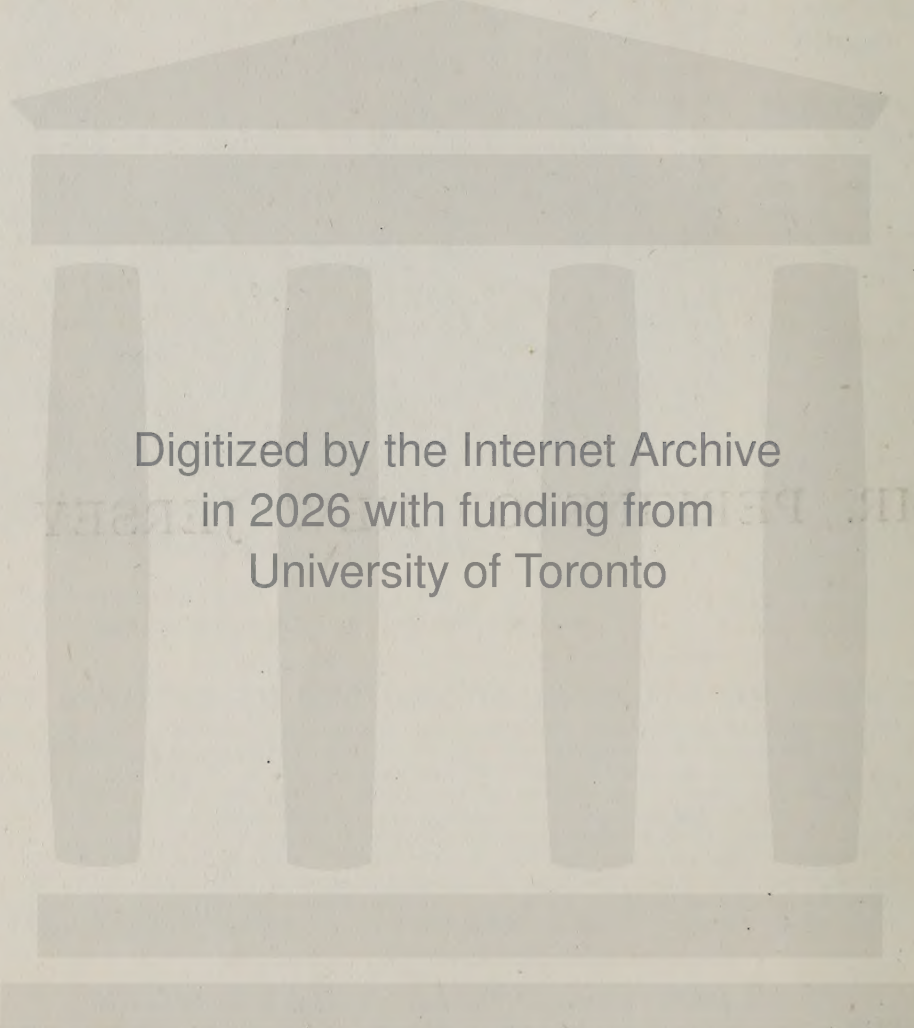
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MR. PERKINS OF NEW JERSEY



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MR. PERKINS
OF
NEW JERSEY

OR
THE STOLEN BONDS

BY
GAY PARKER

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
BROADWAY, LUDGATE HILL
GLASGOW AND NEW YORK
1888

MR. PERKINS

NEW JERSEY

OR

THE STOLEN BONDS

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MR. PERKINS OF NEW JERSEY;

OR,

THE STOLEN BONDS.

CHAPTER I.

THE wind whistled shrilly along the street, driving the sleety rain with a sharp spatter against the window pane. As she listened to the chilling sound Mrs. Marlow shivered; not that she was cold, for the bright warm parlour in which she sat, with its cheerful coal fire, was the very embodiment of comfort; but she shivered out of sympathy with her son whom she knew was then braving the inclement weather, for Mrs. Marlow was naturally of a nervous, anxious temperament and prone to find sources of disquietude where none existed. As she sat in her luxurious chair she certainly looked as if she had no cause for complaint. The room was handsomely furnished; heavy carpets and curtains helped to keep out the cold, pictures adorned the walls, the bay window was gay with bright plants and flowers that seemed to mock at the cold without, the canary hopped and twittered in his golden cage as if begging for a word to break the stillness. But Mrs. Marlow could take no heed of him, she kept looking an-

xiously at the pretty French clock and then shivered as the sleet rattled on the window panes.

"He is very late," she kept repeating. "I hope nothing has happened." She was a tall slender woman of between forty-five and fifty, though she looked far younger, for not a thread of silver was visible in her abundant dark hair. Her fine dark eyes had lost none of their brightness, her complexion, though pale, was fresh and smooth, and her features were regular and clear cut. But a habit she had of pressing her thin lips together, and of frowning till her arched brows met over her slender straight nose, showed her nervous excitable temperament.

Eight o'clock struck and Mrs. Marlow was making an impatient exclamation, but the words died on her lips as she heard the hall door open and shut, and then a man's step in the hall, then the parlour door swung wide and a young man entered.

"Well, little mother," said he cheerfully, "getting ready to scold me?"

"A guilty conscience!" she answered, trying to smile. "You know

you deserve it; out so late in this terrible weather, when only last week you were sick with cold and sore throat and—”

The rest of her speech was cut short by her son stooping over her and giving her a hearty smack.

“And all the ills that flesh is heir to,” said he, laughing and finishing her sentence for her as he rose up and stood before the fire. He was a good-looking young fellow of twenty-five, not at all like his mother, for he was blonde, not a bit handsome, but with a good honest face with plenty of strength in it. A pair of bright honest blue eyes that looked you full in the face, a firm mouth and chin and a nose that had more character than symmetry. The same characteristics showed in his build; a trifle above medium height, his figure showed more strength and vigour than elegance. He would not be noticed twice in a crowd if one was looking for beauty, but if in trouble among strangers one would instinctively turn to him.

“Well,” said his mother, “what has kept you so late?”

“I went to see Mr. Dorset.”

“Ah! and what did he say?”

“He insists he must and he will have a share of the A. & C. R. R. stocks or their equivalent, and also a share of the Jersey farm.”

“He is simply deranged. Your father made all that property over to me in place of money from my own father’s estate which I let him have to carry on his speculations with.”

“Certainly, I told him so. But he

says that the money, and also money that belonged to his dead wife, father invested in stocks of the A. & C. R. R., and sold out with a handsome advance and invested in Government bonds, and that he, Dorset, is entitled to a share of them. I told him I knew of no Government bonds, and he flew into a rage, and swore he’d make me know, and if he could do no better he would sue for part of the Jersey farm.”

As Alex. Marlow spoke, he took hold of the poker and mechanically punched the fire, and it so happened that he did not see his mother’s face as he spoke of the Government bonds, nor the slight start she gave, but there was no tremor in her voice as she angrily said:

“Sue for the Jersey farm? He cannot touch it! It is mine, bought, as I have told you, with my own money. The man must be crazy.”

“He is certainly very violent tempered, and was very offensive in his language to-day.”

“Oh, of course; your poor father had endless trouble with him. I mourn the day he ever took him into partnership.”

Alex. smiled. “That is just what he said. But he swears that unless you compromise and give him part of the Jersey farm he will sue.”

“Let him sue!”

“I hate to have my dead father’s name dragged into court.”

“What would you do? have your father’s widow robbed by this vulture of what he has left?”

“No, certainly not. But he insists

that the money made by their joint speculation in A. & C. stock, father invested in Government bonds, and at his death those bonds could not be found. Therefore, he had made away with them; that the money he invested was a clear loss to him and it was money of his dead wife's, and belonged to his daughter, and she should not be swindled."

"The man is crazy! It is a shame your poor father's name should be hawked about in this manner!"

"Dorset swears that there was at least \$50,000 worth of Government bonds not accounted for that had mysteriously disappeared. I asked him how such a thing could have happened, and they partners? But he said father was the active member of the concern and he trusted him implicitly, and now in winding up the business these bonds cannot be accounted for."

"Yes, they were nominally partners, but he was such a stupe your father had all the work to do, and to support both himself and Dorset. Poor man! he carried a heavy load!"

Alex. Marlow was silent. From hints dropped him by business friends he had been forced to suspect that the deceased gentleman had not been as clean in his business transactions as he might have been, and he dreaded any investigations in court, not knowing what they might reveal. Not for worlds would he let his mother dream of this. If he could only persuade her to consent to a compromise and so prevent any disgraceful developments.

All the property had been settled

on her. Not a cent had his father left him, and he had been surprised to find what a small amount his father had left, considering the large business he had done. He, Alex., had no taste for speculation and was content to "plod" as his father had contemptuously called it, in the office of Mr. Lynn, the great cotton merchant, where he was highly esteemed by his employer for his industry and his fidelity to his interests.

"He carried a heavy load," the widow repeated bitterly.

Alex. was silent, remembering Dorset's threats to make Marlow's estate "unload" and give him his share.

"I would dislike a quarrel with him," he said at last. "A lawsuit is so expensive, and it is terrible to drag father's name in court and have it bandied about. In your place I would compromise, even if I gave up part of the Jersey farm."

"Alexander Marlow! are you crazy? Well might your poor father say you had no head for business. But if you haven't I have, and not one cent of my property will I give up. It is mine, either inherited from my father or what your father worked for. It is well he left it to me and not you, or it would soon vanish."

Her son made no rejoinder to her taunt though he coloured slightly; and so they sat mute for a few minutes.

"I saw Mr. Perkins to-day," said his mother, at last breaking the silence.

"And what did he say?"

"That he thought his brother much

too bitter, and he deplored his violence. We had a very pleasant talk. He is such a nice man. Pity my poor husband had not had him for a partner instead of his ill-tempered half-brother."

"Yes, there is a great difference between them, one would not think they were related. Dorset is so rough and bearish, and Mr. Perkins so gentlemanly and refined."

"He seemed quite interested in my business," continued Mrs. Marlow; "said he hoped his brother would not force matters to an open issue."

Marlow sighed. Mr. Perkins, too, must have heard something of his father's business slackness. If his mother continued obdurate what should he do? Here his mother coughed slightly.

"Mother, you scold me for exposing myself, and here you are going about in a pair of thin slippers this cold night."

"The house is well heated," she answered.

"But not warm enough for you to go about all but barefoot; pray, go and change your shoes."

"Nonsense!" she stifled a cough.

"I insist," he said.

"Insist! who are you speaking to?"

"To you. You are all I have in the world. You shan't trifle with yourself." He put his arms about her as he spoke and kissed her.

She smiled: "I am too comfortable to move."

"Let me run and get your boots for you."

"And rummage up all my things? No, indeed!"

"Then I will ring for Sarah."

"Sarah and Patrick have both gone out."

"Then if you won't let me play maid, you must go yourself. You must obey me, mother dear; I can't afford to lose you."

"Tiresome boy!" but she kissed him as she spoke and rose to obey.

She was not a demonstrative woman and Marlow long after remembered that caress.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. MARLOW left the room and her son sunk into gloomy reflections as to what was best to do to avert the impending trouble. Scandal he almost feared. He could not bear to tell his mother what he had heard, and if he did, she would not believe him. She was a stubborn woman, with strong prejudices and decided opinions of her own, a woman of a high temper who could brook but little opposition. Dorset had a similar temper and they could not endure each other; between these two stormy persons his father would have led a rough life had he not possessed an imperturbable temper that nothing ruffled, and so kept the mastery over both.

But what was he to do now? That was the question. Perhaps Mr. Perkins could be persuaded to act as mediator between the two. Mrs. Marlow liked him, and he had much

influence with his brother. Absorbed with these reflections the time passed swiftly. At last he glanced at the clock; a half hour since his mother went up stairs. Why, she took a long time to change her shoes!

He took up a paper and began to read in the hope of forgetting his anxious thoughts.

Eleven! chimed the French clock.

Marlow started. Where was his mother? Was she sick? Had she taken the sulks at having her will crossed and so left him for the night? How provoking! What a pity she had such a touchy temper!

He threw down the paper and ran up stairs and tapped at her door. No answer.

"Mother, mother, may I come in?"

Still no answer.

He turned the knob and entered; the room was empty.

"Mother," he called, a little startled.

"Mother, mother."

Could she have fallen into a faint? A fit? A vague alarm seized him. He ran into her dressing-room, but she was not there. Into his room, calling as he went, but no answer.

Thoroughly alarmed, he searched the house, but not a trace of her could be found. As he was searching the kitchen, Sarah, the servant, entered.

"Master Alex! and what are you doing here? What's the matter?" seeing his blanched face.

"My mother—Sarah, I can't find her!"

"Can't find her! She ain't lost, is she?"

"Heaven knows! She went up

stairs to change her shoes and never returned, and I can find her nowhere."

"That's strange! This is no night for her to be out. She must be in the house."

"She wouldn't have ventured out alone this time of night," said Marlow, "for you know she is timid."

"Then she is in here, somewhere," said Sarah. "It's too awful cold for her to have ventured out."

"And why should she go without me?"

"To be sure, why should she? She's here somewheres, we'll find her." As she spoke, Sarah led the way to the first floor, saying as she went, "I've been spending the evening with a friend that's dead. Patrick took me there and then he was seized with a raging pain in his side and went to the drug store for some medicine. Has he come in?"

"I haven't seen him."

They both now proceeded to make an exhaustive search; not a closet, not a wardrobe, was left untouched. But nowhere could she be found. Her bonnet lay on a wardrobe shelf, her cloak hung on a peg, her boots were untouched in a closet, but of the owner not a trace! Marlow and Sarah became greatly alarmed.

"Great Heaven!" cried the servant, "what has happened?"

Marlow was silent, but his face paled with a nameless terror.

Every door and window was locked and barred. Mrs. Marlow was very timid of robbers.

"Sarah, was the area door open when you came in?"

"No: I opened it with my pass key."

They stood listening in the hall to catch a sound, but all was still, so still that Marlow could hear his heart beat.

"I can't stand this," he cried hoarsely. "I will go for a detective."

"You can't get one this time of night," said Sarah.

"Yes, I can; I know one very well. If he won't come I'll drag him here," said Marlow, as he threw on his hat and overcoat and hurried away.

In an incredibly short space of time he was back with the officer.

"Any trace of her?" Marlow asked, as Sarah opened the door.

The woman shook her head.

For the third time Marlow made a search of the house, and for the third time could find no trace of her. He gazed helplessly at the detective.

"You say your mother went upstairs to change her shoes?"

"Yes."

"And never changed them," said Sarah, producing the boots.

The detective made no answer, but turning, walked slowly down the hall that led from Mrs. Marlow's room. He turned, and went back to Mrs. Marlow's room and opened the wardrobe.

"Is this your mistress' cloak?" he said to Sarah.

"Yes."

"Has she any others?"

"Of course she has others," said Sarah curtly, offended at the implica-

tion that her mistress' wardrobe was limited to one wrap.

"Show me the others."

Sarah proceeded to search, turning up the wardrobe, bureau drawers, and closet shelves in a wild confusion that would have driven Mrs. Marlow frantic. Too anxious to stand still, Marlow joined her.

"Here!" cried he eagerly, holding up a mass of drapery.

"Have done, Master Alex!" cried Sarah, "that's not a dolman; that's an overskirt. Leave it to me, my dear. These are all she had," said Sarah at last, producing several wraps.

"Her bonnets," said the detective, who was a brusque sort of man.

"Being in mourning, she had but two," said Sarah, lifting them from the wardrobe shelf.

The detective surveyed the sombre headgear with their long veils in silence. At last he asked, "Had she a shawl? A large shawl?"

"To be sure she had," said Sarah, "a large broché shawl that she used about the room when she was sick. It generally lay folded up on this easy chair in the corner, to be handy, and—it's gone!" cried Sarah, staring wildly; "it's gone!"

"Did it always stay there?"

"Always; she was very particular. 'A place for everything and everything in its place,' and that was its place."

"Search for it."

Sarah obeyed, but the shawl could nowhere be found.

"That will do," said the detective, "you may go."

Sarah unwillingly obeyed, muttering to herself, "Proud stomach thing!"

"Mr. Marlow," said the detective, "your mother has either been kidnapped, or left the house in a fit of mental aberration. Did she ever have such attacks?"

"Never."

"Was there anything in her conduct to lead you to suppose she might have one?"

"No."

"Then she was kidnapped."

"I don't believe it!" cried Marlow; "the house was shut up tight and fast, how could any one get in? And kidnapped for what?"

"Have you no enemies?"

"None on earth."

"Has your mother any valuable jewellery?"

"Oh, yes, plenty."

"Then, perhaps, robbers came in and met her. I have heard of such cases."

"Here are her keys," said Marlow, taking up her bunch where Sarah had laid them. "I think she keeps her jewellery case in here."

He opened a narrow drawer in the wardrobe and drew the case out; forced the lock with his knife, for he could not find the key to it, and opened one after another the little leather cases containing handsome sets.

"Here you see, they have not been meddled with."

"Did she keep large sums of money about her room or person?"

"No, what little we had was kept at the bank," said Marlow, as he

replaced the cases and locked them up.

"Then she has voluntarily gone off herself. But whether kidnapped or crazy, she went off wrapped in that shawl, and in the hurry of her flight dropped her slipper on descending the back stairs."

"I cannot believe that she was either kidnapped or went insane," said Marlow.

"Then, you can suggest a better theory?"

"No;" Marlow had no theory to offer, he only felt dazed and horrified.

"She is not here, so she is certainly gone, there is no disputing that," said the detective, "either of her own will or some one's else. You may take either horn of the dilemma you choose."

Seeing he could be of no further use there, the officer left, saying he would notify the police and set them on the watch.

Left to himself Marlow spent the rest of the night wandering from room to room, helplessly peeping under furniture, behind doors, into closets, looking into the most improbable places till the weary night was over.

When the day broke, pale and haggard Marlow sallied forth. He boarded every street car in their neighbourhood and followed it to its terminus, inquiring as he went, but no one had seen any such person. She had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed her up.

Gone! Gone! Gone! What had become of her?

CHAPTER III.

It was high noon when Alex Marlow, haggard, weary, heart-sore, returned from his fruitless trips about the city, and sought the police station to learn what success Appler, the detective, had had. The officer had just come in from a similar unsuccessful trip. The trail which had led him to the back stairs had stopped there; where Mrs. Marlow had walked off in her one shoe, and who she had gone with was an unsolved mystery.

The servants were above suspicion, for they were both out till long after she had disappeared. It was after eleven before they returned; it was ten o'clock when Mrs. Marlow disappeared after kissing her son. As he thought of that caress now, a lump rose in his throat. Did she think of leaving him then? he wondered, and where had she gone to? Oh! Great heaven! Where?

"Perhaps she had taken flight at Dorset's threatening language and fled away. Perhaps she had gone to their Jersey farm. Yes! perhaps she had!" he caught wildly at that straw. He would follow at once—he would take the detective with him. But first he must go and explain to his employers and beg leave of absence. He could not bear to blazen abroad what had happened, so he said that pressing business of a distressing nature would take him away, and Mr. Lynn consented, seeing his haggard looks.

"By the way, Marlow, your father's

old partner was in here this morning inquiring after you."

To be sure. He had promised to give him a definite answer that day; he must go there before he left. He hurried round to the broker's office.

Mr. Dorset sat at the desk in his inner office, and when Marlow tapped at the door, gruffly bade him "come in."

Mr. Dorset was a dark, grizzly, bilious looking man of forty-five, tall and gaunt; his temper was irritable and his manner, on the least provocation, rough and boisterous. He was not suited for his profession, and but for the placidity of his former partner, would long since have gone to rack and ruin. As it was, while the partner had saved him from outside sharks, rumour had it that he fattened on him himself. Since his death Dorset had begun to suspect this and to clamour for his share of the profits which had mysteriously disappeared.

"Well," cried he, at sight of young Marlow, "this is a pretty time of day to come. You said before noon; it is now late in the afternoon."

"I could not come before, Mr. Dorset," said the young man. "My mother—" his voice failed him, he stopped abruptly.

"Dead?" said Dorset, a little shocked.

Marlow shook his head.

"Ill?"

Again Marlow shook his head.

"Crazy?"

Marlow made a third negative motion.

"Then what in thunder is the matter? What are you standing there for, shaking your head like a crazy idiot? If she ain't dead, or sick, or crazy, what is the matter?"

"She is gone," said Marlow, hoarsely, too wretched to take offence at the other's rudeness.

"Gone! Where?"

"I don't know."

"Gone; you don't know where? Oh, this is too thin! What trick are you all up to now? But I'll not be taken in any more. Where are my bonds? I know your father had them in the bank. It seems he took them out just before his death. Where are they, I say?"

A vague suspicion passed through Marlow's mind. Could his mother have fled away to look for these bonds, or to hide them if she knew where they were? for she was far more in his father's confidence than he was.

"I know nothing about any bonds," he said; "or, indeed, if he had any at the time of his death. If he invested in any he probably sold them and reinvested the money, for I have seen or heard of none."

"Then what did he do with the money?"

"I tell you I know nothing about it. He very likely speculated with it. I knew less of his affairs than you did."

"That is a poor get off. I shall put the matter in the hands of my lawyer, and at once. Everything has been settled on your mother, so you can notify her if she wont compromise I shall bring suit for——"

"Notify her? I tell you she has disappeared—vanished—gone!"

"Gone where? What has become of her?"

"God alone knows. I have had the police at work all day, and can learn nothing; I am half distracted."

"Phoo! phoo!" cried the other, furiously. "You can't come it over me that way. If she has gone she has made off with the bonds to cheat me out of——"

Before he finished Marlow dealt him a blow in his mouth that sent him back in his office chair.

Rallying from the shock, Dorset started to rise, his face purple with rage, and the blood spurting from his cut upper lip, when a man who had entered from the rear door of the office, and now stood behind him, laid his hand on his shoulder and kept him in his seat.

"Stay, Thomas," he said, quietly, "let him alone; you egged him on; I don't blame him for striking you."

"But I do," roared Dorset, struggling to free himself.

"Marlow was right," continued the intruder; "neither you nor I would have brooked any affront offered to our precious mother."

Dorset sat in sulky silence, breathing hard, while his brother loosened his grasp, and advancing to Marlow, said:

"I have heard of your trouble; first a rumour on the street, then from what you said to Thomas just now. Believe me, I feel deeply for you, and hope the mystery will soon be cleared up."

"Thank you, Mr. Perkins," said Marlow; "she spoke of you so kindly last night."

"Did she? That was very good of her; she is a woman for whom I have a great esteem. It is probable some temporary aberration has caused her to wander off. Your mother has had much trouble lately, you know."

"True," said Marlow. "I must go now," and without another word to Dorset he walked out in the outer office, Mr. Perkins following him.

"Mr. Perkins," said he, abruptly, "use your influence with your brother to keep things quiet for the present. After my mother is found perhaps all can be explained without any scandal."

"I will certainly do all in my power," said the other, kindly. "And, Alex, let me know of your success in your search; believe me, I take a great interest."

"I know you do," said the young man, huskily. "I am going now to Jersey; we had some talk last night which may have put it in her head to go there."

"Then let me hear from you on your return. Keep me posted; if I can render any assistance call on me."

"Thanks, thanks," said the young man, grasping his hand and hurrying away.

Mr. Perkins stood at the door and watched Marlow till he disappeared from sight. He was very unlike his half-brother; no one would have believed they were related. He was a man of about fifty; a fair blonde, tall

and slender, with a rather elegant air, while his brother was gaunt and shambling. Mr. Perkins' complexion was fair and pale; he had a high forehead at the expense of his hair, which was so light that it did not show the grey threads that sprinkled it, while his brother's grizzled black locks grew thick and shaggy, save for a little bald spot on the back of his head. It looked something like a rough nest with one egg in it. Dorset's whiskers ran from ear to ear, and he wore an unkempt grizzled mass to match his hair, while Mr. Perkins' carefully-clipped side-whiskers were the envy of his friends. Withal he was a high-bred looking man, dressing with a neatness that was almost dandified, while Dorset was careless to slovenliness. Mr. Perkins thrust his hands into his pockets; he slowly shook his head as he watched Marlow disappear down the street.

"Well! well! well!" he muttered, and turned back into Dorset's office.

Accompanied by Appler, the detective, Marlow posted down to the farm in Jersey. The more he thought of it the more convinced he was that his mother must be there, and though he travelled by the lightning express it seemed to him that they crept along, so wild was he to get there. They left the train at Waterford, and drove over a mile through the country to the farm. Marlow had only been there in the summer, when all was gay and bright; how bleak and cold everything looked now! The green meadows were covered with snow, the

cows that were wont to graze on them were now lowing in their stables. The fruit trees that he had last seen bowed beneath the weight of their luscious burden, now stretched their bare arms aloft, and trembled in the icy wind.

He shivered as he approached the house. How dismantled it looked! Going around to the back door they rapped, and the man in charge made his appearance. He was unfeignedly surprised to see Marlow, and still more so on his inquiring if Mrs. Marlow was there.

"Mrs. Marlow! What! the madam? No, sir, of course not!"

"He may be put up to hide her. Let us go in," whispered the detective.

"Let us come in and warm, Stevens," said Marlow, watching his face closely.

Stevens' face was vacant enough, save for surprise, but he admitted them, and led the way to the room where his wife sat by the stove holding her baby.

"Keep the man in conversation," whispered the detective, going ahead.

"We wish to see Mrs. Marlow," he said to the woman, as he pretended to warm his hands; "where is she?"

"Mrs. Marlow!" she repeated, in astonishment, "why, in town, of course."

"She left there last night, and we can't find her," said Marlow, seeing no reason to beat about the bush; "and from something she said in her last conversation I thought she might have come here."

"We ain't seen nothing of her," said Stevens.

"Not her shadow," said his wife.

Marlow's head sank. The detective eyed the couple suspiciously.

"They may be in her pay," he whispered. "People in her state are often very cunning, and they may not suspect."

Marlow winced. People in her state—Oh! how horrible!

"We would like to look over the house, and we would like for both of you to go with us," said Appler.

The rustics stared.

"Certainly," said Stevens, "jist wait one minute till I go——"

"No," said the detective, "you can't go anywhere but with us."

Stevens stared harder than ever. It suddenly broke on him that Marlow had in charge a crazy man that he was humouring; that accounted for his worried looks. So he obligingly led the way over the whole house, "up stairs, down stairs, and in my lady's chamber." But no one was to be seen, and the more the detective insisted on going into the garret, and prowling over the dark places in the cellar, the more certain Stevens was that he was raving mad; and he was then seized with a fear that he might break loose and choke Mary Jane and the baby.

As Mary Jane appeared the most unsophisticated of the two Appler endeavoured constantly to study her countenance, thereby hoping to find the hiding place of Mrs. Marlow.

Following his train of thoughts, Appler tried to edge up to Mary Jane

to watch her face as they stumbled through to the cellar.

Following out his train of thoughts, Stevens constantly jammed himself between them, thrusting in his brawny shoulder, for that purpose, like a wedge.

"La, me!" said Mary Jane to her husband, "what makes you so clumsy-like, a-trampin' on people's toes?"

"Better tramp their toes than have 'em choke you," thought Stevens; "I'll tramp somethin' else besides, too, if he worries me much more."

"Squire," whispered he suddenly, taking Marlow aside as the detective poked behind the door, "I see how the land lays—let's shut him up here till we kin get help to take him off to the 'sylum."

"What?" said Marlow, greatly puzzled.

"I see," said Stevens, grinning, "that the man's as mad as a March hare—but I ain't 'fraid of him—don't let Mary Jane creep to a notion though, or she might swoon—but we kin all slip out while he is a-nosin' in the potato bin, and lock him in—the cellar is strong enough to hold him till I kin ride for help—Come! we must be quick about it"—as Marlow stared.

"Mad!" said Marlow, "why he is a detective I have hired to hunt up my mother!"

"Jerusalem!" ejaculated Stevens. "Blamed if I didn't think he was a crazy lunc you were a-tryin' to git rid of!"

"Appler, it is no use to search

farther; she is not here," said Marlow, too distressed to laugh at Stevens' suggestion. "Don't let us waste time, but go back home before she wanders too far."

With great difficulty he got Appler into the buggy and drove away. Stevens watched them anxiously as they drove off.

"Nothin' kin persuade me but what he's ragin' crazy," he said, shaking his head.

"You are so impatient, Mr. Marlow," said the detective, provoked. "We can do nothing this way; she may be secreted at the barn. I believe that man is deep and cunning."

"So cunning that he thought you were mad, and wanted me to shut you up in the potato cellar till he could go for help to bear you off to the asylum."

"The fool!" said Appler, in a rage.

Baffled, disappointed, heartsick, Marlow started back home.

"Advertise," suggested Appler.

So in the next morning's *Herald* appeared:

"Disappeared from her home, No. 105 W. 27th and K. Streets, on the night of the 3rd of March, Mrs. Annie Marlow, widow of the late David Marlow. Mrs. Marlow is a woman of forty-five; tall and slender, with dark hair and eyes. Any information concerning her will be thankfully received, and the informer handsomely rewarded by her son.

"ALEX. MARLOW."

Dorset at his office read this. "Oh, oh!" said he, "so that is why he seemed so cut up!"

Mr. Perkins, as he sipped his chocolate, read it, and shook his head.

Mr. Lynn, glancing over the paper, read it. "Poor fellow!" he ejaculated, "I had no idea that was the trouble."

Marlow himself read it and then anxiously waited for an answer, but none came.

After the mail-carrier had passed by he went down to the office to tell Mr. Lynn that he was too upset to work.

"It would be useless for me to come; I could not be trusted to write a letter," he said.

"No, of course not," said his employer, "take two weeks; surely in that time you will learn something."

"I hope so," said Marlow, and hurried back home, for fear some news might come while he was out.

But Sarah reported, "nothing!"

Aimlessly he wandered about from room to room, where everything reminded him of her—where everything spoke of her absence.

A woman is much more missed out of a house than a man, and leaves many more reminders. To Marlow, who had never been at home save when his mother was there, the place seemed like a tomb—but where everything spoke of her.

The flowers in the window; the canary twitting mournfully in its cage with no one to speak to it; the darkened rooms with no one in them,

but all full of her presence; in the half-finished piece of fancy-work in her basket; the book she was reading with her mark in it; and, worse than all, her little terrier, who at sight of him crept under her favourite chair, and gave vent to mournful howls.

As these dreadful sounds broke the stillness, Marlow's over-wrought nerves gave way—he sank into a chair and burst into tears.

"Oh, Jip! Oh, Jip! don't! don't! She is indeed gone! gone! gone! But where? What has become of her?"

For answer Jip's howls broke the silence.

CHAPTER IV.

MARLOW dismissed the detective, only retaining him to consult with. The busy season was over, and Mr. Lynn agreed to spare him half of every day, and he began the search afresh. From noon to midnight he plodded to and fro, searching in asylums, in hospitals, at the morgue, seeing women betrayed; women gone mad; women dead, murdered, or suicides; driven on to see, dreading to see; feeling at one moment anything was better than the awful uncertainty that was maddening him. Then, when face to face with the horrors he searched into, thanking God for the uncertainty which gave him a hope to cling to.

Moved by his strange misfortune,

his friends were very kind to him, Mr. Lynn especially, and so, too, was Mr. Perkins; he had always seemed a cold, cynical, distant man, but he showed himself now to be extremely sympathetic.

"And you say you can hear nothing of your mother?" he asked.

"Nothing," said Marlow.

"Why, that is terrible! I am very sorry for you, Marlow; can I help you in any way?"

Again Marlow said, "Nothing."

But he felt grateful and surprised, too, at Mr. Perkins' unexpected kindness. Dorset's conduct was very different; he showed neither interest nor sympathy. He had never forgiven the blow Marlow had dealt him. Dorset, moreover, was worried at his own affairs; they did not go to suit him, and Mrs. Marlow's disappearance had muddled them more, as he could get no settlement with her. He gave up his brokerage business and determined to move to Chicago.

Marlow was glad when he left; he hated the sight of him, and rejoiced when he went away, and he saw him no more.

Every afternoon Marlow went on his search, answering advertisement, or police notices. He found, with a strange torpid surprise, that there were many others as wan and haggard as himself, seeking their friends in hospitals, in asylums, in morgues—a sorrowful caravan hopelessly wandering to and fro like the lost in the halls of Eblis—parents seeking for their children, husbands for their

wives, wives for their husbands, sisters for their brothers.

Meeting in asylums, hospitals, or at the ghastly morgue, they seemed to find a sort of consolation from the fact that there were others as wretched as themselves; that they were not alone in their strange misery.

Meeting them at every fresh scene of trouble and distress, Marlow began at last to recognize many of these sad eyed travellers.

Now it was a wife, with a little son in her hand, seeking for the husband and father, who went out one day and was heard of no more; swallowed up in the great city, as in the maw of a mighty sea.

Then it was a mother seeking her son, who had disappeared, and was never more seen or heard from.

There was one young girl who of late had joined the throng. A pretty dark-eyed creature, so young, so innocent looking! She did not seem more than seventeen.

"Poor thing!" thought Marlow, "what business has a child like that here in these scenes?"

She was generally accompanied by a young man of between twenty-five and thirty. They were not brother and sister. Marlow knew instinctively that they were lovers. Whom could they be seeking? Again and again he met them. The girl seemed as restless as himself, and, delicate as she looked, she endured an enormous amount of fatigue. All the forenoon she tramped the streets, accompanied by a respectable, middle-aged servant woman, but in the afternoons and

evenings she had this young man with her.

Without knowing his name, Marlow recognized him as a gay man about town, and wondered to see them so much together. But the girl in her guilelessness seemed to be ignorant of his true character, and leaned on and was guided by him in all things, and a feeling of pity for her rose in Marlow's heart.

"Poor thing! Poor thing! so young and so innocent, and travelling that dangerous road!"

He had been summoned to the morgue to identify a woman taken from the river. Again his heart had quivered as his eyes rested on the pallid clay. Again his heart had swelled with relief as he failed to recognize her.

He stood aside as the girl and her escort entered and walked to where a man was lying on the marble shelf. His face was black and swollen, as though he had been garroted, and as the water dripped, dripped upon it, to keep some semblance of humanity in it, he made a frightful picture. The girl walked straight toward him, her great black eyes dilating with a horror beyond words.

Then she drew back.

"It is not him!" she cried. "It is not him!" and burst into tears. "Oh, father! oh, father! Where are you? Come back to me! Come back to me!"

Marlow's heart warmed to the young creature. "Poor child!" he thought, "who can she be?"

But the young man hurried her

away before he could learn. Instinctively he did not like this man, and yet the girl clung to him in a dependent fashion that touched him.

Weary, sick at heart, longing to know the worst, dreading to know the worst, wild at the suspense one moment, the next clinging to it as to the last hope, Marlow, worn down, went home to the dreary house to rest, unable to sleep save as exhaustion brought him fitful rest with which to begin the next day's journey.

Touched by Marlow's haggard looks his friends viewed him with great compassion, and chief among them was Mr. Perkins. But he went farther than the rest, for he offered the young man any pecuniary assistance he might need; but Marlow refused any help. Mr. Perkins seemed disappointed.

"Well, do as you choose, but I would like to do more than give you idle words."

"But they are not idle," said Marlow; "they comfort me a great deal. Your sympathy, and that of my friends, cheers me more than I can tell in the horrible trouble that has fallen on me."

"It is horrible," said Mr. Perkins shuddering. "I can think of nothing more so. Well, my boy, keep a brave heart and all will yet turn out well."

"I hope so," said Marlow; but his tones belied his words.

Mr. Perkins was much touched. "Keep me posted, keep me posted," he said. "Be sure you let me know if you ever get a clue, and I will do all I can to help you follow it."

"I despair of ever finding a clue," said Marlow in a broken voice, and turned away.

"Poor fellow!" said Mr. Perkins, shaking his head; "poor fellow! poor fellow!"

One day when he was at police headquarters an attendant thrust his head in the door.

"Mr. Appler, two ladies wish to see you." And two ladies heavily veiled entered the room. The figure of one was stout, elderly, common; her very back looked broadly plebeian. The other was slender, elegant, graceful.

"Take seats," said the detective, rising and proffering chairs.

They glanced apprehensively at Marlow as he stood by the window in a painful daze.

"He won't notice you," muttered the detective, "he's in too much trouble himself," but he motioned Marlow into the inner office.

The young man obeyed. Reassured by this, the two women threw up their veils and through the sash door Marlow recognized the pretty young girl and her elderly female attendant.

"My father!" cried the girl eagerly. "Have you heard anything?"

"Not a thing that is reliable," said the detective. "But don't be discouraged," he continued, touched by the quivering lips and tearful eyes, "I haven't lost hope and I keep up my inquiries, and I am in hopes of soon being on a trace of him."

"What news have you of my

daughter?" asked the stout woman, in a trembling voice.

"None, so far."

"Have you failed to get a trace of her?"

"I did think I had a clue, but it proved to be some one else."

"What was it?" cried the woman eagerly. "Maybe I could follow it myself."

The detective coloured, and hesitated.

"What was it?"

Still he hesitated.

"Speak!" cried she, her suspicions aroused. "What are you akeepin' back?"

"It isn't anything," said the detective. "Only I heard of a young girl that I thought answered to the description. But 'twasn't her, I think——"

"Where was she? Where was she?" The stout woman rose from her chair and faced him, her great frame quivering with excitement.

"Speak, I say!"

"She was on —— street, at Madame M.'s."

The woman's face purpled, she shook her fist in the detective's face. "How dare you?" she cried, in a voice thick with passion. "How dare you? My poor girl is an honest woman, sir!"

"Come," she continued, turning to the girl, who stood by with a bewildered air, "this is no place for the likes of you." And she hurried the astonished girl from the room.

The detective wiped his face.

"Phew!" said he, "what a tur-

moil! I do hate women clients! specially old ones."

"Who are they?" asked Marlow, emerging from the inner office.

"The girl is the daughter of Thomas Dorset who disappeared some weeks ago."

"What!" cried Marlow, "Thomas Dorset! I never heard of it."

"Well, 'tis so. The family try to hush it up—that is, his brother. You see, he wasn't prospering here, and so he broke up and moved to Chicago."

"Yes, I know that."

"Then he returned here to settle a few matters and get his daughter, when all at once he disappeared. He was tracked as far as the ferry one night and nothing more was ever seen or known of him. You see his business was in a bad way and many people believed he committed suicide. His brother is very touchy on that point, and hates to have it noised abroad, so he tries to have the matter hushed up; but he put the business in our hands to ferret out. But the girl can't rest on that, and has been doing a lot of detective work herself, I understand."

"And the old woman?"

"Is Dorset's housekeeper, and the girl's nurse. You know her mother died when she was born, and this woman has had care of her. And her daughter has lately disappeared."

"She seemed very much excited?"

"Because I hinted at where I thought her daughter had landed. When girls disappear that way, there is usually a man in the case. It is a way they

have, you know. And when the men tire of them they generally end in the place I suggested—but the old woman was furious."

"And very naturally," said Marlow, disgusted at the cold-blooded way of the other, and left the office.

Thomas Dorset! he could not recover from his surprise, and Mr. Perkins tried to hush it up. Well, pride was his ruling characteristic. But the poor little girl! so young, so innocent, so helpless!

As he left the station he saw the stout woman slowly battling her way in the crowd with her young charge in tow. Marlow quickened his pace and overtook them.

"Miss Dorset," he said bowing, "I did not know till just now of the terrible bereavement that had befallen you. I knew your father; he and my father were partners—Marlow is my name. A similar calamity has befallen me, in the disappearance of my mother, so I can sympathize with you."

During this speech the girl clung to the stout arm of her companion, as if afraid to speak. That worthy surveyed Marlow suspiciously, till she recognized him as the man she had seen in the detective's office.

"We heard of your trouble," she said, civilly enough. "Mr. Dorset told us of it when it happened. And now in a few weeks he has gone the same way!"

"And you have been able to learn nothing?"

"Nothing," said the girl, speaking for the first time.

"And your uncle?"

"He has put the matter in the hands of the police, and does not wish me to go about, but I cannot stay still, and every strange person that I hear of, that is likely to be papa, I feel I must fly and see—and yet—I dread—" she broke off, her voice choking.

"Yes, yes, I understand," said Marlow, sympathetically.

The stout woman eyed him suspiciously; she had been the girl's nurse and now felt that the care and responsibility of her rested on her more than ever.

"Come along, Miss Ethel," she said abruptly; "come along. We musn't be talking to strangers on the street, 't isn't proper."

"But nurse—Mrs. Ramsey," said the girl, as Marlow drew back colouring, "the gentleman knew papa—"

"It don't follow he should know you," said the nurse shortly.

Without a word, Marlow lifted his hat and stepped back.

Ethel's face crimsoned.

"Pardon her, sir," she said hurriedly, in a low voice, over her shoulder, "but nurse is in so much trouble she is hardly responsible."

Indifferent to his opinion, Mrs. Ramsey waddled on. "Young people are innocent and easily deceived," she said, "and young men these days are sly and artful and unprincipled besides. He heard your pa was out of the way, else he wouldn't ha' come poking here."

"But, nurse, I have heard that his mother had disappeared."

"Well, let him go and find her, and not come here nosing round you."

"I am sure he can do me no harm just to speak to me and say how sorry he felt——"

"Let him keep his sorrow for himself," retorted the other. "No, I trust you with nobody but Master Horace, and he, being your pa's ward, I has knowed him for a long time, so feel safe with him."

"That's perfectly right, Mrs. Ramsey," said a pleasant voice, and the young man whom Marlow had seen so often with Ethel Dorset, joined them.

He was a handsome man, near thirty; his tone to the nurse was a mixture of the friendly and the condescending, but she thoroughly believed in him. To Ethel he was the soul of tender solicitude, for they were engaged, and she thought him the embodiment of all that was good and great.

He belonged to that class of men who can make themselves very fascinating to women, and are known among men to be fast and unscrupulous.

"Well, little girl, what have you learned this morning?" He gazed down tenderly into the soft black eyes raised so confidently to his.

"Nothing — nothing," her lips quivered.

"Poor child! Well, I am not disappointed; I regard these detectives as humbugs and blockheads. We can do almost as much ourselves by advertising and visiting hospitals and

morgues and hunting the streets at night. If your father's mind has given way, which I suppose it has, he may be hiding out somewhere and come creeping out at nights. That is one reason I take you out."

"Yes, I know you have a good reason for everything you do," said the girl, confidently.

His cold grey eyes flickered for a moment under her innocent gaze.

"Poor nurse has been equally unsuccessful," Ethel continued. "We can hear nothing of Jenny."

"And got insulted besides," cried Mrs. Ramsey, rage getting the upper hand of propriety. "He said he believed my girl had gone to the bad!"

"Hush! hush! Mrs. Ramsey, consider, my good woman——"

"I can't help it, Master Horace. My heart feels like it was abust-in'——"

"Well, I told you the detective was a blockhead. Now I say he is a brute besides, and ought to have been kicked. I wouldn't worry with him any more. We'll hunt up Jenny ourselves."

"Yes, Master Horace; I believe if anybody can help me, you will," cried Mrs. Ramsey, gratefully.

"Who was that you were berating when I came up?" asked Horace, abruptly.

"A Mr. Marlow; he says his father was partner with Mr. Dorset."

"Marlow was his partner, and swindled him too."

"Aha! I said they were a bad lot!" cried Mrs. Ramsey, trium-

phantly—though she had said nothing of the sort.

"But the young man had nothing to do with it," said Ethel, gently.

"Except pocket the cash," said Horace, with a contemptuous shrug.

"Poor fellow! he has lost his mother," said the girl.

"Why, little one! you seem struck with him."

"I feel sorry for him," Ethel said, simply. "I know that he must suffer."

"Pooh! men don't feel like women."

"But he feels; he had a distressed look."

"Upon my word! he seems to have made an impression!" cried Horace.

And Ethel, surprised at his tone, said no more.

"Don't think me cross," said Horace Jeffreys, after a moment's silence. "I know I am a fool about you, but I can't bear for you to look at another man."

"Well, goodness knows, she don't, Mr. Horace," said Mrs. Ramsey coming to Ethel's relief—who stared in astonishment at her lover's jealousy—"Never was there a poor girl with such a sorry showing."

"She has me," said Jeffreys.

"To be sure, she has you," said the nurse. "But then a young girl wants some diversion, and to see a little of the world, and to pick and choose a bit before she settles down."

"A girl that's been hacked about will be no choice of mine," said Jeffreys, with a touch of asperity in his tone

"I'm sure I'm perfectly satisfied with my choice. If I can only have you and papa I ask no more," said the girl gently, slipping her slender hand through his arm.

"Little darling!" said the lover, the cloud lifting from his face, and pressing the hand to him.

Mrs. Ramsey fell behind the couple and jogged on in silence. She began dimly to feel that Jeffreys' tone had altered since Dorset's disappearance; he was becoming domineering and exacting, and made her more than uneasy for her charge. Besides, her heart was torn and anxious about her own daughter who had so mysteriously disappeared.

Jeffreys himself felt that he had been a little cross, now that his good humour had been restored by Ethel's submission.

"Make the peace with me, Mrs. Ramsey," he said, smiling. "Remember that when a man is in love he is on tenter-hooks. Don't brood over my selfish words."

"I wasn't thinking of them, Mr. Horace," said the nurse, "but of my own troubles. My heart is aching for my child."

"Poor nurse! Poor nurse!" cried Ethel, pityingly. "Horace, we must try and find poor Jenny."

"We will, we will. Cheer up, Mrs. Ramsay, we'll find her," cried Jeffreys.

CHAPTER V.

MARLOW's strong will stood him in good stead now, but one day he received a note that was the means of casting all his hardly won composure to the winds.

The note was written in the name of Patrick O'Neal, his mother's late coachman, and entreated an interview. He was sick, and had something of importance to tell him. The note was written in a neat female hand.

Something of importance! What could Patrick know? He left his desk, and thrust the note into his pocket, and started off in the dusk of the evening. So preoccupied was he with his thoughts that he brushed against a man before he saw him.

"Why, Marlow! Is that you?" said Mr. Perkins's voice.

"I beg your pardon," said Marlow. "But I didn't see you."

"You did seem in a brown study," said the other, smiling. "Have you any news of your mother?"

"Not a word, but I am going to see Patrick O'Neal, our late coachman, who is sick and begging to see me; says he has something of importance to tell."

"Yes! Well, I hope it will turn out true. I always thought the servants knew more than they cared to tell, though you seemed to trust them entirely. Let me know the result."

"Thanks, I will. You have also been in trouble about your brother?" said Marlow.

"Yes, indeed. My belief is that

poor Thomas committed suicide by drowning. His affairs were left in a terribly tangled condition. Nothing left for his daughter. She has only what I can give her, and that is not much, for my means are limited."

"That is terrible!" said Marlow.

"Isn't it? You see we all have our troubles; our skeletons in the closet."

Marlow did not feel like moralizing, so he hurried on and boarded a horse car. Though it was now May, the weather was cool and cloudy. A chilly, misty rain fell over the city, enveloping it like a pall. It was quite dark when Marlow reached the obscure, badly-lighted quarter where the sick coachman lived.

He entered the swarming tenement, climbed two flights of stairs, stumbled along a dark entry, and finally entered a dirty, ill-kept room, dimly lighted by one candle stuck in the mouth of an empty bottle. The candlestick was suggestive of the occupant, for the room was redolent of whisky, and Patrick lay on his bed sick from a debauch. The room was dirty and untidy; a young woman in a tumbled wrapper sat on the only safe chair, watching with an air of great disgust the sick man as he tossed on his bed.

"Water! water!" cried he. "I am dying of thirst. Give me water."

The young woman arose with an effort and handed the water in a handleless cup.

He raised himself on his elbow to take it, then with a shriek struck the cup from her hand, and would have

struck her had she not stepped back.

"Water!" cried he. "I asked for water and you gave me a snake!"

"Snake! It is your drunken, muddled brain!" cried the girl, provoked beyond measure. "Don't you see the water splashed all over the floor, you drunken creature?"

"No. I see nothing but snakes swarming over the floor, swarming over the bed, swarming everywhere!"

"That's all foolishness," said the girl, "for if there was a snake in the room I wouldn't stay here a minute."

"Is that so?" said the man, partly pacified.

Here Marlow, who had been standing in the half-open door, entered. "Why, Patrick," he said, "how came you in such a fix?"

"Drink! Master Alex, drink!" cried the man.

"But I never knew you to drink before; how came you to do it now?"

"To drown trouble," cried Patrick, "to drown trouble. Oh! Master Alex, I can't look you in the face—Oh! Lord!—there's a snake! an' another! an' another! Oh! the place swarms with them! swarms with them! Oh! Lord! Oh! Lord!"

He tried to leap from the bed but Marlow seized him and held him down.

"Get out of the way!" he said hastily to the girl, "or he will hurt you in his drunken frenzy. Are you his wife?"

"No, indeed!" said she contemptuously.

"What are you doing here, then?"

"I was hired to wait on him; I am very poor," she said, bitterly.

"This is no place for you. Where is your husband that he lets you do such work?"

The girl hung her head in silence while her face flamed.

Patrick's struggles now absorbed Marlow's attention.

"Let me go! Let me go!" he yelled. "The snakes! the snakes! oh! the snakes!"

The poor wretch's yells brought into the room a couple of boys eager to see all that was terrible, horrible.

"Can't you boys run for a doctor instead of standing there staring," cried Marlow, provoked.

But they stood stolid and motionless.

"Run, fetch me a doctor, and I'll pay you," cried he.

The thought of money acted like an electric shock and they fled away and soon returned with a young physician who strove to get into practice by starting in the slums. He now advanced to the bed.

"Hurry, doctor, and quiet him before he tears himself to pieces," said Marlow, a little out of breath with his exertions.

The doctor hastily poured out an opiate, and, after a desperate struggle, part of it was poured down his throat, and, overpowered, Patrick fell heavily to the bed.

"See here," cried the boys, making a fresh diversion, "pay us! pay us!" Marlow threw them twenty-five cents.

"A quarter apiece! A quarter apiece!" clamoured they.

"Begone!" cried Marlow, seizing a broken chair and menacing them.

With a volley of abusive language they fled the room.

After a while the opiate had its effect and Patrick calmed down and had a lucid spell.

"How are you feeling now, Patrick?" asked Marlow kindly.

"Master Alex," said he, "I can hardly look you in the face. And when you know all you will want to kill me. But pity me, for I sold myself to the devil, bodily! bodily!"

"How! What did you do?" cried the other, much startled.

"And since then I've had no peace night or day!" cried the ex-coachman. "So I took to drink to drown my sorrows. But begorra! it seemed as if I but tightened the old boy's claws on me, and day after day I see nothing but devils and imps and snakes——"

"Never mind that! don't mention them!" cried the doctor, as Patrick shivered and trembled, and a cold sweat broke out over his face. "Think of something else."

"Now, Patrick," said Marlow, soothingly, "what did you have to tell me?"

"It was about your mother, blessed lady—that I was bribed to steal away that turrible night—and I've niver had a minute's peace ever since."

"Helped to steal away!" cried Marlow horror stricken. "Stolen by whom?"

Again Patrick strove to quiet him-

self, but he shook as with an ague while the cold sweat started over his face.

"Yes—bad luck to him! bad luck to him! I sold myself to——"

"Your oath! Your oath! Remember your oath!" cried a voice from the door that made them all start. "See! The snakes are after you!"

With a yell the drunken wretch fell back in a fresh fit.

"Confound that fellow!" cried the doctor. "All this work to go over again!"

Leaving the doctor to struggle with the frenzied creature, Marlow rushed for the door—but no one was there. Up the hall he ran but could find no one in the darkness. It was impossible to take the only candle from the sick-room. After some delay he succeeded in procuring another light, but no trace of the intruder could be found.

Angry, disappointed, Marlow returned to help the doctor with the sick man, who by this time was raving. With great difficulty they got him quieted.

"I think now he'll sleep till morning," said the doctor. "And then when he wakes, you can question him;" and he went away.

Marlow sat by the bed and watched the sleeper. How bloated his face! how much he had altered! he had been so steady. And what did he know about his mother? Great Heaven! who had hired him to take her off?

He became half frenzied as he

thought, and felt that he could not wait; that he must wake the sleeper to find out, whether it made him worse or not. What mattered it for such a treacherous wretch? One whom he had so trusted! When he could bear his thoughts no longer he turned to the girl who was leaning wearily back in her chair, and asked: "How long have you nursed him?"

"Two days, but he has been drinking hard ever since I've been here."

"And how long is that?"

"Two weeks."

"Did you write that note to me for him?"

"Yes; he kept crying out he must tell you everything; he must, for the devils were after him. So I offered to send for you."

"Who hired you to wait on him?"

"Some brotherhood to which he belonged; I've forgotten the name."

"But this is not the proper work for you," said Marlow. "You had better let me get a man in your place."

"And leave me to starve?" said she bitterly.

"Have you no friends?"

"None," cried the girl, passionately. "Not one!"

Marlow viewed her with pity. At last he said, "How came you here?"

"It is the same old story," said she.

"The man I trusted, deserted me, and I crept here to hide myself—till the end comes—where no one can find me."

"At any rate," said Marlow, full of pity, "go and rest while I am here,

I will stay till Patrick awakes, so take this opportunity to sleep."

At first the girl refused, but finally consented. "My room is just across the way," she said. "If you need anything, call me," and she left the room.

"The scoundrel!" muttered Marlow. "Whoever he be, he ought to be shot."

Then he seated himself in the one good chair and waited and waited. When would he wake; and would he be at all rational? What would he tell him? Perhaps it was all a figment of his drunken brain—Oh, Heaven! and must he sit there all night in torture, waiting for that drunken brute to wake?

The hours passed; he spent the time in putting his watch in and out of his pocket.

The house sank into slumber; the street quieted down. The hands of his watch pointed to three o'clock. A man came up the creaking stairs, stumbling down the passage and stopped at the door, cautiously turned the knob and entered. He was a perfect stranger to Marlow. He tiptoed up to him and handed him a note.

He was a plain, rough man, and he stood gazing curiously at the sleeper as Marlow read the note; it was from Appler:

"Come at once to police headquarters. I have arrested Patrick's accomplice; he makes startling divulgements—Hurry."

JOHN APPLER."

CHAPTER VI.

ALL in a quiver Marlow rose to his feet.

"I will call the young woman," he whispered to the messenger.

"Don't worry her," the man answered. "Mr. Appler bid me stay till you came back. There is a hack at the door, sir."

"All right." Marlow snatched his hat, hurried away, and leaped into the waiting hack. "To police headquarters," he said. "Drive fast and double fare."

"All right, sir," said the driver, plying his whip, and they rattled over the almost deserted streets.

At last they reached the police station. Marlow paid the driver and hurried in. Appler's office was closed. Surprised, he went to the public office and asked the policeman on duty:

"Where is Mr. Appler?"

"Mr. Appler! He's out, sir."

"Out! He sent me word to meet him here."

"Better see the chief, then."

Marlow entered the chief's office.

"Where is Mr. Appler?"

"Out of town."

"Impossible! He wrote me to meet him here."

"That cannot be, for he was ordered out of town on important business early yesterday, and won't be back till eight o'clock in the morning."

Marlow's heart seemed to stop.

"Read this," he said, and handed the note.

"This is very strange," said the officer. "Wait a moment." He left the room while a strange sickening feeling crept over Marlow.

Soon the chief returned. "I have been making inquiries," he said. "Appler is out of town, and no such arrests have been made. Where were you when you received this?"

Marlow explained in as few words as possible.

"It is a put-up job to decoy you from that house. That fellow's accomplices are trying to spirit him away. But we'll try and get even with them yet."

He rang a bell. "Call Harris and Thompson," he said to the man who answered.

Two policemen soon appeared.

"Go with this gentleman," he said, "and arrest anyone he bids you to."

"Make a clean sweep of his friends," he said to Marlow; "especially the volunteer nurse—Be quick! or they will be off."

Marlow hurried out, but the hack was gone. After some delay they secured another, and drove away at a rapid rate. When they reached the house all was wrapped in darkness. After some trouble they forced an entrance, and hurried to Patrick's room—it was empty! No one in the house could throw any light on the matter. The angry landlord gave what seemed the most plausible solution.

"Most likely the drunken fellow waked and got up and went away."

But the note that Marlow held convinced him that was not so. In vain the police blustered and threatened

the inhabitants of the tenement. They had heard nothing, and knew nothing, and were moreover very mad at being waked up.

The girl across the way, whom they all called Lizzie, said she had once or twice heard steps, but she supposed it was Marlow moving about, or sending for the doctor. And this proved to be the very time that Marlow left. But after that she asserted she heard nothing.

Disappointed, sick at heart, full of vague and wild suspicions, Marlow returned home. He threw himself upon the bed, but could not sleep, and lay there in a sort of a nightmare till morning. At eight o'clock he hurried after Appler.

The detective was in his office, and heard his statement with surprise. "Well, sir," he said, "you have learned this much—that she was kidnapped."

"But by whom?—she had no enemies—and for what?"

The detective walked the floor for a few minutes, then he stopped before Marlow, and with his hands in his pockets he jingled a bunch of keys, as he slowly said:

"I believe Dorset is at the bottom of it. He's disappeared too. I don't believe he drowned himself. I believe he's run off somewhere with her."

"But for what reason?"

"Well, he thinks your father swindled him out of lots of property, and now he's going to force the widow to pay it back."

Marlow sat appalled. He did not

like Dorset; he remembered his hard threat—but this—this was awful!

He sat like one dumb.

Appler was touched with pity for him.

"You go home," he said, "and rest, and let me take a hand at it. I'll call at your house by twelve o'clock, and tell you what I have learned."

Without a word Marlow rose, but he staggered like a drunken man out of the room.

"Poor fellow!" muttered the detective, "he will go mad before long, if there isn't some let up for him."

Mechanically Marlow went home, and to his room, and sat there. This new idea was something more terrible than any, yet worse than death—far, far worse. It would be a relief to know that she was at rest and peace—but this—the worst he had ever feared was that, wandering about in an unsettled state, she might be knocked and cuffed about by hard, rude strangers, or lodged in some asylum and be subjected to severe treatment—but this—decoyed, kidnapped by an unscrupulous enemy! Oh, God!—it was awful!—How much more must he suffer?

At last Appler came, and Marlow went down to the parlour—deserted desolate parlour.

"Well, Mr. Marlow," said the detective, "I've been inquiring round and about, but I ain't done much. I went to that house, but they either don't know or won't know anything. I rather think they don't, and that Dorset decoyed you off, and then hur-

ried away his accomplice; but I doubt if anyone heard him. It is likely he had a confederate in the house, but who I can't say. I tried to see the young woman, but she was sick from all she had gone through, her friend said; so I didn't see her. Perhaps she was playing off."

"I think it likely she was really sick," said Marlow, feeling a pity for her in spite of his own trouble.

"Then I called on Mrs. Ramsey, Dorset's housekeeper, and tried to pump her; but she really knew nothing. That's a poor place for that girl," he added, abruptly. "She ought to be sent back to a boarding-school. I said so to Mrs. Ramsey, but she said there were no means to defray her expenses. That Dorset had left nothing behind him, and that the establishment was now kept up by her savings."

"Mr. Perkins said that Dorset had failed, and, he thought, had committed suicide."

"Did he? Well, that confirms my theory that Dorset was desperate, and took that method to recover what he considered his—and so compel your mother to settle with him."

"And if he has," cried Marlow, roused to sudden fury, "I'll make him swing for it!"

"First catch him," said the detective. "He will make off after he gets the money, and sends for his daughter—he's devoted to her, I'm told, all that he cares for—the housekeeper, too, seems fond of her, which is strange, considering——"

But Marlow paid no attention to

Appler's gossip; he was not interested in the private affairs of Dorset's household.

He sat in moody silence. At last with an effort, trying to arouse himself, he said:

"Suppose I go after that sick girl? I can take her some fruit, and ask to see her."

"That's not a bad idea," said Appler. "You'd make a good detective."

So the two took their way back to Patrick's late residence, only to learn that the girl was very sick indeed, too ill to see anyone. Marlow left the fruit, and saying he would call in the morning went away to pass a wretched day and night.

Promptly the next morning he called.

"Lizzie has gone," said her next door neighbour.

"Gone!" cried Marlow. "Where?"

"To the hospital. She was took so ill that some district ladies who came visiting her got her into the hospital, and she was took off last night."

"To what hospital?"

"I dunno."

"On what street then?"

"I dunno."

"Looks like we are doomed to be baffled," said Appler. "But I'll try and unravel this mystery."

That night as Marlow was moodily walking to and fro in the desolate parlour, the bell rang, and Appler was ushered in by Sarah who snorted defiance at him.

"I have found the girl," cried Appler, indifferent to Sarah's wrath,

"and oh!—such a mare's nest—she is Mrs. Ramsey's daughter! It has happened just as I told her; but the girl is very ill and can't live long. Come while she is conscious."

He hurried Marlow away.

The hack stopped at the hospital door. The surgeon in charge had in consequence of the urgency of the case agreed to allow the two to see the patient.

She had altered very much since Marlow had last seen her. Her face was ghastly white, and dark circles were about her mouth and eyes. Her long coarse black hair lay over the pillow making her pallor more startling.

"Has she come?" she asked eagerly as they entered.

"Here, Lizzie," said the doctor, "is a gentleman who wants you to tell him all you know about that drunken man who disappeared at your lodgings."

"I know nothing about him!" cried the girl. "Don't speak of him, the very thought of him makes me sick." She shivered and closed her eyes.

"Only say if you know anything more than what you told me the night I saw you," said Marlow gently.

She remained silent.

"Speak, I implore you. So much hangs on your words," he urged. "What do you know?"

"Nothing! Nothing!" cried she, "I know nothing. Leave me."

Disappointed, Marlow drew back, his hopes dashed. He was leaving the little room where she lay when there was a slight bustle at the door

and Ethel Dorset and Jeffreys entered.

At the noise the sick woman's eyes opened and rested on them.

Jeffreys started, and stood scowling and gnawing his lips.

"Jenny!" cried Ethel, hurrying forward, "oh Jenny! is it you?"

"Yes, it is me," said the other.

"You said a stranger who knew about my father wanted to see me."

"That was to make sure of you, for see you I must and would before I died, or I could not die easy. I have little cause to love you, Ethel Dorset, for you robbed me of my lover, ay he was mine till you came between us and took him from me. He swore, till you came, that he loved me and would be true to me, and I listened, fool that I was! believed him, trusted him, only to be cast off, spurned like the dust from his feet! But you shall never have him! Never! Never! He has deceived me, he will deceive you."

"I am dying now," cried Jenny Ramsey, turning on her guilty lover. "Dying, murdered by you, body and soul. But now know, Horace Jeffreys, that your triumph ceases, for my restless spirit shall haunt you. Never a minute's peace, never a minute's joy shall you have. Never! Never!"

She ceased and sank exhausted on her pillow.

The guilty man stood dumb, his tongue clove to his mouth.

With one horrified look—like a creature in a frightful nightmare—Ethel turned to go.

Jeffreys moved to follow, but she,

shuddering, shrank from him and moved towards the door. He dared not follow her, the look upon her face restrained him.

Full of pity for her—his enemy's daughter—Marlow followed. Still like one in a dream the girl went on and out into the street—alone. Pity for her dazed state, her troubles, her helplessness, made him follow. Nor had she gone far before a man spoke to her and thrust himself on her. Marlow quickly shoved the fellow aside.

"Be off!" cried he, "or I call the police. Don't be frightened, Miss Dorset, I will protect you. You know me. Marlow is my name."

"Only let me get home," cried the distracted girl. "Only let me get home."

"You shall at once," he said, and hurried her on, for she refused to take a carriage.

"No, no, I cannot!" and panted on, like one who would escape from herself.

At last they reached Dorset's house.

"Oh! what shall I do? How shall I tell her mother?"

"Tell her the simple truth," said he, "she is obliged to know it."

Mrs. Ramsey herself opened the door. "Well," said she, "who was it? What is the matter? Where's Mr. Horace?"

"Oh, nurse! Oh, nurse!" cried the girl. "Jenny! Jenny!"

"What of Jenny? Speak!"

"At the hospital," sobbed the child. "Ill! Oh, so ill!"

"Dying?" said the mother, with a strange calm.

"Oh, nurse!" cried the girl, clinging to her arm, "dear, dear nurse! Worse than dying!"

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Ramsey fiercely. "Unloose me, girl! Answer me! Can't you talk? Where's Mr. Horace?"

"Don't speak of him!" wailed the girl. "Don't speak of him!"

"And why not? Who are you who stand there gloating over us?"

Without a word Marlow closed the door and retired. He walked across the street and stood waiting, looking at the house in an aimless sort of way.

All at once the door opened, Ethel was thrust out weeping and clinging in vain to the furious woman, and the heavy door closed again. The girl stood on the steps weeping bitterly.

Again the door opened and Mrs. Ramsey came out. She thrust Ethel off the steps.

"Begone!" cried she, "and never darken my doors again. You have done nothing but bring ruin and trouble on me and mine! Begone! I hate you!"

She drove the weeping girl off the steps and then hurried away.

Marlow crossed the street. As he stopped beside her, Ethel shrank back, but as she recognized him she sobbed out:

"Oh! what shall I do? What shall I do? Where shall I go?"

"Come with me," said he gently.

"Where?"

"To my home."

The timid, frightened young creature clung to him helplessly.

"Oh! will you be so good to me?" she sobbed.

"Trust me," said the young man, soothingly, "I will protect you."

She looked up at the frank, manly face, in the clear, honest blue eyes.

"I will go," she said simply.

Hailing a passing hack he helped her in and drove home.

CHAPTER VII.

SARAH stared as she opened the door for them.

"Master Alex!" she ejaculated in astonishment.

"Sarah," said he gravely, "this is Miss Dorset, the daughter of my father's former partner. (He set his teeth.) He, like my mother, has disappeared, and his daughter is left alone in the world. I have offered her a home. Give her my mother's room and do a good part by her, Sarah."

"Yes, sir," said the astonished domestic, and led the weeping girl away.

He had given his enemy's daughter his mother's room! His whole soul went out in pity and compassion for the child.

For the first time in weeks Marlow fell asleep as soon as his head touched the pillow, and he slept soundly till morning. He therefore felt refreshed

and braced up when he entered the breakfast room and waited for Sarah to make his coffee.

He had made up his mind he would keep his enemy's child and give her a home till his mother was found and her father's strange conduct cleared up. Poor helpless creature! she had more to bear than he had. He felt an unspeakable commiseration for her.

He was still musing on this subject when Sarah entered. Sarah was an austere maiden of fifty.

"Master Alex," said she solemnly, "I want to ask you something."

"Well, Sarah, what is it?"

"How long have I been serving you and your mother?"

"I don't know," said Marlow; "a long time."

"Well, I can tell you I've been with you all a matter of twenty years. You were nothing but a little boy in knickerbockers when I first saw you."

"Yes," said Marlow, as Sarah paused.

"And a pretty little boy you were," Sarah added.

Marlow acknowledged the compliment.

"Now, then," pursued Sarah, "seeing I've been with you all day in and day out all these years, doesn't it give me the right to speak sometimes?"

"It would look so," said Marlow, wondering when she hadn't spoken, and what she was driving at.

"Then," said Sarah, clinching the argument, "since you acknowledge such to be the case, what I really want to know is—What did you fetch that

young girl here for? And what do you mean to do with her?"

"Those, I think, are two questions," said Marlow. "But seeing that it is you, I will agree to regard them as one. I fetched her here to give her a home. I mean to take care of her."

"Do you mean to marry her?" asked Sarah.

"Marry her! By no means! I mean just what I say; to give her a home till her father turns up again."

"And if he never turns up?" said Sarah, solemnly.

"I don't know. But she shall stay here for the present; here she is safe."

But Sarah evidently didn't think so. All this was so out of Marlow's usual conduct, that her mind was full of vague suspicions.

"Master Alex," said she, "pardon an old friend and servant—but we are all weak creatures, liable to fall and be caught in the snares of the devil—what is your idea about that young girl? She's nothing but a child and seems in sore distress."

"Sarah," said the young man, a little sternly, "did you ever know me to do a vile thing?"

"No," said Sarah, promptly, "I never did."

"Do I look like a man that would do a vile thing?"

"No," said Sarah, "you don't."

"Then, when I tell you once for all, that the girl's father has disappeared, and that his ungrateful servant in whose charge he left her thrust her helpless and unprotected on the street, and that I found her there weeping

and terrified, and brought her home to take care of, for the present, at least, I hope you believe me."

"And so I do, Master Alex," said Sarah, greatly relieved. "You must not feel angry with me, Master Alex, 'tis for the interest I feel in you, my dear, and the anxiety too, now that your dear mother ain't here to watch over you."

"You think I need watching?" said Marlow, half smiling.

"All of us need watching," said Sarah, solemnly.

"Indeed! What an admission! Well, I never would have thought of watching you. However, you must take good care of this young lady and treat her with great respect."

"Of course I will," said Sarah; "but Master Alex, it is not proper for you, a young man, to stay alone in this house with a young lady."

"Well, Sarah, here are you to give propriety."

"Yes," said Sarah, as though making an admission, "there is me."

She was in truth an undeniable fact in flesh and blood, or more strictly speaking, in good raw-bone, being very angular both as to figure and character.

"I am here but very little," Marlow continued, "and I leave her in your charge, feeling that you will do a good part by her. I know that you can be trusted, even if you don't feel sure of me."

"Master Alex! Master Alex! Do I deserve that? This is no subject for jesting—light jesting."

"And I don't feel much like jest-

ing," said Marlow, sighing. "Now you know as much about the matter as I do, so please give me my breakfast, I am very hungry. Don't wake the child, let her sleep as long as she will. Poor thing! I expect it is the happiest part of her existence."

Thus urged, Sarah hurried away to resume her forgotten duties. Marlow had hardly finished breakfast before Appler was announced.

"Well," said the detective, "wasn't that a pretty kettle of fish last night?"

"Don't speak of it," said the young man, shuddering, "it haunts me."

"I stayed," said Appler. "I wanted to make sure it was Jenny Ramsey, and I knew that the other girl would take the news home. Sure enough, pretty soon here came Mrs. Ramsey, all but crazy—but the poor thing was dead—I felt sorry for her, used as I am to sights of trouble, when she kept crying out, 'Oh! Jenny, my child, my child, speak to me! speak to me!' She poured and heaped curses on Jeffreys' head. But he was gone, so much harm they did him!"

"Low dog! he deserves the gallows," said Marlow sternly.

"He'll come to some bad end. Fate will ketch up with him; it always does."

"I hope so. See how many women's lives he has blasted."

"Yes, and that pretty little creature! She looked like one who had lost her senses."

"She had enough to craze her, poor child! Do you know," said Marlow, thinking it best to have no mysteries,

"do you know that woman turned the poor child out of doors last night?"

"She did? How do you know it?"

"Because I went home with her," and Marlow briefly told the whole story.

"Well, Mr. Marlow, I don't know but what you have done the wisest thing for yourself," said Appler. "I would keep the matter a profound secret, and not let anyone know where she is. She will be a splendid decoy for her father. Then, when Dorset can't find her, he will advertise, and you then have the dead fall on him."

"I did not do it with any such motive," said Marlow.

"No, I suppose not, but all the same you could not have done a better thing for yourself."

"Then you think it is useless to search for my mother at present?"

"In the way we did, yes. We know now that she has been kidnapped. All the suspicion tends toward Dorset. If we can find him, or that drunken coachman, the matter is soon cleared up. We have gained this much knowledge, and need not go jaunting about the country on all sorts of wild goose errands. I wouldn't be surprised if we find that coachman in the morgue some day. But I'd take things easier; little Miss Dorset's your best card."

Appler went away to prosecute the search for Patrick, and Marlow returned to his duties in his employer's office.

He was glad of an excuse to avoid meeting Ethel, for, in a revulsion of

feeling, he could not bear the thought of seeing her—his enemy's daughter, sheltered in his own house! His better judgment told him it was mean and low to feel thus, but it took him all day to battle against it and overcome it.

In the meantime Ethel Dorset was in a state that would have moved to pity her father's deadliest foe. On the previous night Sarah had led her to her room with many suspicious glances, which the girl felt without comprehending.

Having arranged her for the night, Sarah left her, muttering to herself and shaking her head.

Too wretched to sleep, afraid of the dark, the girl turned the gas down to a taper, threw herself on the footstool before Mrs. Marlow's armchair, and crouched there, her face buried in her hands.

She had ceased to weep when the terror of being alone on the streets was over. She sat there stunned, unable to think, unable to feel, almost unable to comprehend what had befallen her.

It was as though she had been shaken by a mighty earthquake, and she was as one who blindly staggers to and fro to keep his footing, with the earth reeling beneath.

She could believe nothing; she could not yet take it in. She could not comprehend it, because she hardly knew that such things existed.

She only felt that she had lost everything, that her world was rocking and shaking beneath her. She could not bear to think. She shivered and

recoiled when her mind strove to work—to remember.

In the mighty upheaval all her world had been overthrown, and she wandered round and round in a maze.

Great chasms had sprung open, revealing things of which she was ignorant—she hardly knew that such things ever happened—and now in this frightful upheaval her faith in all whom she loved and trusted had been overthrown. All whom she thought good had turned out evil; all whom she loved and trusted she now recoiled from.

She sat there all night long, like one numbed; she was stunned. When Sarah came, in the morning, she found her there still, seated on the stool with her face buried in her lap, the bed untouched.

"Why, child!" said the startled domestic, "haven't you slept any?"

She raised her face; her eyes had the look of a dumb animal's in pain. "No," she said, quietly, "I couldn't sleep. I couldn't lie down."

"Take a bath," suggested the practical Sarah, "that will refresh you."

"No, I am not tired."

"Will you have your breakfast?"

"No, I am not hungry."

She had removed her eyes from Sarah, and was gazing at the opposite wall with a far away look, and she answered as one who heard without taking in the meaning.

Sarah said no more, and left the room. The girl was evidently in great trouble, and Sarah, if austere, was

kind-hearted; but she was eminently practical, and her kindness took that form. She soon returned, bearing a dainty little waiter of breakfast; but, to her disappointment, Ethel refused it.

"I'm not hungry," she said; then, noticing Sarah's crest-fallen air, she added, "I can't swallow; there is a lump here," grasping her throat, "that chokes me."

"That's nervousness," said the practical Sarah. "Here, swallow this coffee, anyhow."

Thus urged, Ethel meekly obeyed, and managed to drink half a cup; it was very strong, and probably saved her a bad headache.

"Don't crouch upon that stool," said Sarah; "you'll get cramped from head to foot."

Ethel meekly arose and took a chair. Sarah left the room, and the girl relapsed into her state of apathy. She sat with her hands clasped in her lap and her eyes riveted on the carpet, mute, motionless, dead to all her surroundings. The strong coffee had quickened her mind, and it began to try feebly to work. It was like a moth round a candle, ever flying at the flame, ever recoiling, scorched.

And so, all day long, her soul wandered round and round, beat upon its prison bars, while she sat outwardly calm, inwardly quivering with the pain that every motion gave her. She mutely declined all of Sarah's offers of hospitality, and sat there still and mute.

"Like one in a trance," said Sarah to Marlow, on his return in the even-

ing, and she entreated he would go up and see her.

This he unwillingly did, hating, dreading to enter his mother's room and see Dorset's daughter there. But at the sight of this picture of despair Marlow forgot himself and his troubles.

"Miss Dorset," he said, gently.

The girl raised her dark eyes with the pitiful look in them.

"Don't sit here so motionless. Sarah tells me you have neither eaten nor slept. Is that so?"

"No—yes—I don't know."

"You will get sick if you go on in this way. Won't you come and take a little dinner?"

She raised her eyes. "No," she said, wearily, and dropped them again. He looked at her pityingly for a moment and then turned away. This was something beyond his experience, and he was at a loss to know how to act. He beckoned Sarah from the room, and they held a consultation.

"I think the best thing is for her to get to sleep," said Sarah, who was something of a nurse. "And if she won't go to sleep herself, she must be put to sleep."

"How can you do it?" said Marlow, wonderingly.

"Why, give her something to make her sleepy."

"Sarah, mind you don't kill her!"

"Master Alex! Why, what an ignorant, skeery thing a man is!"

"Yes, we are poor helpless creatures without women, the very best of us," said Marlow, smiling.

"Get along with you, with your jibes at me!" said Sarah, who was secretly delighted at the sudden improvement in his spirits.

"Well, what do you propose to do?" asked Marlow.

"Your mother had a bottle of drops that she took to quiet her nerves; I thought I'd give her some of them."

"You know how much?"

"Oh, yes; your mother took from twenty to thirty drops."

"Give her twenty."

"It would take thirty, she is so upset."

"I'm afraid it might hurt her, as she is not used to it. Let's compromise on twenty-five."

And to this Sarah consented. She beguiled her patient into swallowing the opiate under the guise of water, and after awhile had the satisfaction of seeing her fast asleep in her chair. Then she called Marlow to help lift her on the bed.

The young man easily carried her slender form and laid her among the pillows. She was certainly very pretty. And what an innocent, childish face!

"That will do now," said Sarah, who was in her glory with some one to take care of. "Now I can manage by myself."

Marlow retired, and Sarah undressed her new charge and put her comfortably to bed.

It was late the next morning when Ethel awoke. At first she was considerably puzzled to know where she was. How strange the room looked!—not her own little simple room—the handsome furniture adorned with

mirrors, the luxurious chairs, the tables and dressing-case full of lovely knick-knacks, all was strange to her. Pretty pictures covered the walls. Over the mantel hung a full-sized portrait of a little boy in knickerbockers. A handsome, chubby fellow. Something in the boy's face was familiar to her. Who was it? Where had she seen him?

Where on earth was she? She felt frightened. Then she began slowly to remember all that had happened, and that Marlow had befriended her. This then was the room she had been in all the time; she had never taken in its appearance before, and so had no recollection of it.

Then her mind went slowly back. Yes, Marlow had taken her off the street that night—that dreadful night—when heaven and earth seemed about to pass away! She feebly moaned and hid her face in the pillows.

When she could stand her thoughts no longer, she tried to rise. How weak she felt! her head swam; she sank back on the pillow.

The door opened and Sarah came in.

"Ah, you are awake," said she. "How do you feel?"

"I feel as if I had been sick," said the girl.

"I don't wonder. You've had nothing to eat for I don't know how long. Never mind about dressing. Put on this wrapper and sit up and I'll bring you your breakfast."

Ethel meekly obeyed and with Sarah's help was ensconced in Mrs.

Marlow's arm chair. And soon Sarah reappeared with toast and egg and some strawberries on a fancy dish.

"Master Alex sent you these and hopes you will enjoy them."

"Master Alex?"

"Yes, Mr. Marlow. He is 'Master Alex' to me; I've known him ever since he was the little boy yonder over the mantelpiece."

"Yes; he is very kind," Ethel said wearily.

"Kind? He don't know how to be anything else," said Sarah with unwonted enthusiasm; but not for worlds would she have let Marlow hear her praise him. It might make him vain and on no account would she have such a calamity befall him. Men, according to this virgin, were too much addicted to vanity anyhow.

But Ethel heard Marlow's praises with indifference; to her he seemed almost like a shadow. The sleep had helped her and her appetite had revived; she was very hungry and ate her breakfast with relish. This was the greatest compliment she could pay Sarah's culinary skill, and she bore away the tray well pleased.

Left to herself the girl sank back in the chair and slowly took up the burden of life—her life which had been so calm and monotonous till late, and now—how awful—she shivered.

And so for days and weeks she lived over and over that night—when for her heaven and earth passed away, and naught remained but chaos.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOR a week she continued in this dazed state, sitting motionless for hours; gazing out of the windows, now on the floor, now at the wall, yet seeing nothing; going over and over all that had happened; sitting motionless, taking no heed of time.

Sarah did all in her power to rouse, to cheer, to comfort her; and after a week or two, was rewarded by seeing a slight improvement in her. With the elasticity of youth, Ethel began to rally from the numbing effect of the great blow.

Then Sarah, whose many virtues were dimmed by the vulgar vice of curiosity, burned to know what was the reason that she came all on a sudden that night, and was it that she had no friends nor relations? So, being unable to contain herself, she ventured to inquire of Ethel where was her father, and with a little pumping, got out most of the story.

Its tragical end and Horace Jeffreys' perfidy did not seem to surprise her much. She was prepared to believe any act of folly in women, or vileness in men.

"It is what they are born for," said she. "Women are fools and men are rogues, always, where each other are concerned."

"Are all men knaves?" asked the horror-stricken Ethel.

"Well, if they ain't knaves, they are all knavishly inclined," said the pessimistical Sarah. "That is the bulk of 'em;" she added, hastily.

"Now, there's Master Alex; he's a glorious exception, though I say it myself that shouldn't say it—Yes, a glorious exception. Master Alex is as good as gold—that he is, as good as gold."

Ethel heard this hard cash valuation of Marlow in silence. Her mind was a pendulum. She recoiled with horror at the idea of the universal depravity of man; on the other hand she shivered at the thought that the man she loved and admired should be a special monster.

But Sarah, whose gloomy views of mankind were caused by a disappointment in early youth, now dismissed this favourite topic to return to the more interesting subject of Ethel's adventures. But when the girl told her how Mrs. Ramsey, on hearing of her daughter's state, had turned her out of the house, Sarah's wrath boiled over.

"The hussy!" she ejaculated.

"Oh, no! she is no hussy," Ethel mildly remonstrated.

"She is no better than she ought to be," said Sarah, with the austerity of unimpeachable virtue.

"None of us are," said Ethel simply.

"The blessed little creetur!" muttered Sarah to herself.

"Poor nurse was wild with sorrow," Ethel continued. "I try to think that she did not know what she said or did—and yet——" Ethel shuddered as she recalled Jenny's frantic words, which her mother's actions seemed to corroborate, and she relapsed into silence,

Then a new idea arose in her mind to harass her. She felt very shy of Marlow. How much did he know? What had he heard? He had met her on the street—that he had been at the hospital she did not know—dream. But he had seen her turned out of the house by Mrs. Ramsey; what must he have thought? what could he have thought? what should she say to him? how could she explain? She did not know what to say, so she hid from him. She kept to her room so close that she grew pale and languid.

At last Sarah suggested she should come down stairs and take dinner with Mr. Marlow.

"Oh, no! I cannot!" cried Ethel, shrinking back.

"Well, I wouldn't be skulking here like I was hiding," said the outspoken Sarah. "People will think something."

"Think what?" said the girl.

She looked so innocent, and was so ignorant of worldly affairs that Sarah became suddenly non-committal.

"Never mind!" said she, shaking her head.

"Sarah, what do you mean?" said the girl, a little alarmed. "People say what?"

"That you are ungrateful to Master Alex after he has adopted you," said Sarah, at a loss for a word.

"Oh, I wouldn't be that," said the girl, hastily. "Sarah, I'll do what you wish."

"Now, that is a sweet young Miss," said Sarah, charmed by her submission.

"What am I to wear? All my things are soiled."

"Just help yourself out of this bureau and wardrobe," said Sarah. "These are Mrs. Marlow's clothes, but Master Alex said you were to wear 'em."

This was so. Marlow, at Appler's suggestion, refrained from sending for Ethel's clothing, so that no one might know where she was. So Marlow bid Sarah select anything of his mother's that was suitable for her to wear.

And now, at twilight, she crept down stairs and stole into the parlour to await Marlow's return. Seated at the window she looked out upon the street at the people passing by, then around at the silent room. A feeling of intense loneliness crept over her, and the tears sprang to her eyes and trickled down her cheeks.

She grew very shy and timid as she waited there for Marlow. She hardly knew him when she saw him, and here she was living in his house as one of the family; all of his family for that matter, unless Sarah was included. All her claim on him that she had lost her father as he had his mother, and that her father was his valued friend.

"Well, no one could know papa but to love him! no one; he was as tender and loving—Oh! if she only knew where he was now!—if—if—"

Some one came up the steps, the door opened, a man's footsteps were heard in the hall. A panic seized her. Oh, what should she say? What should she do?

As Marlow entered the dim parlour a slim figure rose up in the gloaming, and stood mute and motionless to receive him. Its timid, shrinking attitude touched him. He advanced quickly. !

"Good evening," he said, kindly. "I hope you have recovered from your fatigue."

"I am very well," she answered, in a trembling voice.

"I am glad to hear it. I was afraid you would make yourself ill, you kept so close," he said, taking a chair near her.

The girl said nothing, but sighed wearily.

Alex took a match from his pocket case and lit the gas. Then each looked at the other. She saw a young man who was neither handsome nor stylish, with a pair of honest blue eyes, and a kindly smile that lit up his face, and made it better than handsome. At the same time he saw that the dazed look had gone out of her eyes which were now swollen with weeping, and that even yet her face quivered as if she could hardly keep the tears back. That sight softened him completely; he forgot she was his enemy's daughter; he only saw the poor distressed young creature.

"I hope," he said, gently, "that you will try and feel at home here."

She was silent, and looked at her slender, interlocked fingers as they lay on her lap.

"Is Sarah good to you?" he asked, not knowing what to say.

"Very good."

"Dinner is ready," said that personage, suddenly drawing back the folding doors that led into the dining-room.

"So are we," said Marlow, rising. "Come, Miss Dorset, come."

She timidly allowed him to lead her into the room. But Ethel had no appetite; she played with her food, and finally laid her knife and fork down.

"What is the matter?" asked Marlow, who had been hospitably pressing everything on her.

"Nothing; I have dined quite heartily," she murmured faintly.

"Do you call this dining heartily? How do you manage to exist?" said Marlow, smiling.

"I am not hungry," she said.

"No, you have been cooped up so long. Sarah must take you to walk; better not go out alone."

The dinner came to a disastrous end.

"Now," said Marlow, after their return to the parlour, "what can I do to amuse you?"

"Nothing," said she, faintly. Then the rudeness of this speech bursting upon her, she became overwhelmed with confusion.

Marlow laughed.

"Mr. Marlow," said the girl suddenly, "will you please answer me a question?"

"If I can."

"Well, is it proper for me to stay here?"

"With Sarah, a respectable woman, in the house to take care of you, I can't see that it is improper," said

Marlow, gravely. "If you didn't stay here, where else would you go?"

"Nowhere," cried the girl in a quivering voice. "I have no friends!" and she burst into tears.

Alex took her hand tenderly. "Dear little girl," he said, "don't be so distressed. Here is one friend to begin with, and there is no telling how many more beside."

But Ethel mournfully shook her head.

"Have you no relations?"

"None that I know of—I have heard of a few—but papa had quarrelled with them."

"Your uncle, Mr. Perkins?"

"Papa and he fell out, and indeed we never had much to do with him; I hardly knew him."

"Did you always live with Mrs. Ramsey?" Marlow asked, thinking she was very refined for that woman's rearing.

"Not always. Mamma died when I was a baby, and Mrs. Ramsey took care of me till I was eight years old. She was very kind to me then."

"She was your nurse?"

"And papa's housekeeper, and Jenny and I were playmates; she was older than I. Then papa sent me to Miss Dudley's private school. She was very select and kept only a few scholars. She was very kind, but very strict; we had to do just so and just so," said Ethel, half smiling. "We must hold our elbows down, our chins up."

"I endorse Miss Dudley," said Marlow, looking at her straight, reed-like figure,

"Never cross our feet, never hold our arms akimbo, and always clasp our hands on our laps," continued Ethel, unconsciously falling into rule. "Mrs. Ramsey said it was all foolishness, but papa said it was all right; that girls could not be too particular in their deportment."

"What else did you learn besides deportment?" asked Marlow, amused and anxious to take her mind off her troubles.

"Oh, a great many dry things," said Ethel, "and some nice things too."

"What were the nice things?"

"We read Scott and Tennyson for amusement—some of Tennyson Miss Dudley would not let us read at all."

"Yes?" said Marlow. "Did she not teach you any accomplishments?"

"Oh, yes; I can draw and paint a little, and sing and play a little."

"Why, Miss Dudley did a retail business in the accomplishment line," said Marlow, smiling.

"She said we were not to boast, it was vulgar," said the girl, gravely; "and it was fearful to be vulgar."

"Very terrible," said Marlow.

"But I am afraid I don't reflect credit on Miss Dudley. I can only sing ballads and play dance music. Papa did not want any other; he said it was a racket. He wanted me to learn to sing Scotch and Irish melodies, because mamma sang them, and he was devoted to her, though she only lived a year after they were married."

"Are you like your mother?" asked

Marlow, thinking she did not resemble Dorset in the least.

"Very much, and I am named from her; Ethelinda was her name. Papa called her Linda, so he called me Ethel; he said he could not bear to hear her name called about."

"When did you leave Miss Dudley?" asked Marlow.

"Early last winter, and in March papa disappeared; he went out one afternoon and crossed the ferry; that was the last seen of him——" her voice trembled, and she stopped abruptly.

"What became of your father's property?" asked Marlow, trying to solve that mystery.

"It all disappeared. We were living on Mrs. Ramsey's money when that terrible night came, and——" again her voice failed her

"Had Mrs. Ramsey always been kind to you before that?"

"Always."

"Where did you first meet Jeffreys?"

"He had been papa's ward; papa knew him well, and thought highly of him. He was the only man he would let me know; he said I was too young for beaux."

"And you were engaged to him?"

"Yes."

"With your father's consent?"

"No; after his disappearance Horace said, being left as I was, it would be safer to have a protector, and he was so much older he would know best what to do; I must be guided by him in all things. He seemed so good

and wise," she added, in a quivering voice.

"Did Mrs. Ramsey know of your engagement?" said Marlow, trying to find out the exact state of affairs.

"Not at first; not till after Jenny left."

"Where was Jenny all that time?"

"She was a shop-girl, and worked down town, and soon after papa disappeared Jenny disappeared—and——" she broke down.

An awkward pause followed.

"Perhaps I ought to tell you why Mrs. Ramsey turned me out of the house," said Ethel, trying to swallow her sobs. "You won't know what to think."

"No, no; don't distress yourself; I know everything. Now let me give you a little sketch of my story. My mother disappeared one night—disappeared down those back stairs, while I sat here waiting for her to come back—she never came back!—and the police are looking for her to this day, and without a clue till lately. A former servant wrote me word to come to him; he was sick, and wanted to tell me something. So I went—and there was Jenny, hired to nurse him; she had written the note in his name. He was very ill, and before he could tell me anything, except that he had helped to kidnap her, he was taken with a convulsion and could say no more. That night he disappeared, and cannot be found."

"How awful!" cried Ethel.

"I then went back to interview Jenny, who called herself Lizzie, thinking he might have told her

something; but she had over-taxed her strength and was taken very ill, and sent to the hospital. When I found her there she was dying, and that is how I came to be there when you came in and heard everything. I followed you into the street, fearing for you to go home alone. And now try and not think of it any more. Let it pass from you as an ugly dream."

Ethel sat mute for awhile, looking down on her properly folded hands; then they unfolded, the slender fingers interlaced and locked together. Suddenly she raised her head; her dark eyes opened wide as she said abruptly:

"May I ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"Are all men wicked? Sarah says they are."

"I hope not," said Marlow, gravely.

"I am afraid Sarah is a pessimist."

Ethel looked puzzled.

"I mean she takes jaundiced views."

"She said they were all rascals where women were concerned."

"Sarah should not talk to you so," said Marlow, sternly.

"But she said that you were as good as gold."

"I certainly am an honest man, if she means that," said Marlow, with a grave dignity that awed her. "How any man can take advantage of a helpless woman is an infamy I cannot comprehend."

Another long silence, while Ethel sat with drooping head gazing upon her interlocked fingers. Then, looking up, she said, timidly:

"May I ask you another question?"

"Just as many as you choose," said he gently, feeling an unspeakable pity for the forlorn young creature before him.

"Why did you bring me here to your home?"

"Because I did not know where else to take you."

"But there are orphan asylums," she persisted.

"True, but you are almost too large to play at being a foundling, though you are an infant in the eye of the law."

"I didn't mean that," she said, a little annoyed. "But isn't there a place where big orphan girls can go?"

"Perhaps there is; I never have investigated the subject. I am afraid you are on a sort of debatable ground; too old to go to an orphan asylum, too young to go off for yourself; neither child nor woman."

"I am a woman," she said, drawing herself up with a curious sort of dignity.

He bowed respectfully. "But too young and inexperienced to mix and buffet with the world alone."

"I could work; I am strong," she said, proudly.

"Content yourself to remain here till your father returns."

"But I dislike to depend on the charity of a stranger, even if your father was my father's partner," she said.

"I hate duplicity," thought Marlow. "Playing a double part gives a man a guilty feeling."

He rose and walked the room for a minute or two. Ethel watched him, the slender hands nervously locking and unlocking. At last he paused before her, and said, gravely:

"Miss Dorset, I do not wish to claim credit for what is not my due. From what I have learned lately, I have reason to suppose that my father died owing your father a debt. Now, suppose you remain here till your father returns, as a sort of set-off. You can do it with an easy mind, feeling no obligation."

"I don't desire her thanks," thought Marlow, "and I won't receive them, keeping her here as a decoy."

She looked at him earnestly. "You won't deceive me? There is no impropriety?"

"Under the circumstances, on my honour, none. I will treat you as if you were my sister."

"I wish you were my brother," she said, wistfully.

"Would you feel easier to call me so?" he asked, smiling, though he winced at the thought of being Dorset's son.

But she drew back and sadly shook her head.

"No. Mr. Marlow will do."

"Well, if you don't object, I would prefer to call you Miss Ethel"—for he detested the name of Dorset.

"As you please," said she, gently.

"Now, then, Miss Ethel," said Marlow, "if your mind is set at rest, I suggest that you try to take a good refreshing sleep and get a little colour back into your cheeks; they are very pale."

"I am always pale."

"But not that sort of pallor. Here comes Sarah. Sarah, put your young charge to bed that she may get some beauty sleep."

"You talk as if I was a baby," said she, a little provoked.

Marlow laughed, glad to see that he could rouse her from her dejection.

"Good night, Miss Ethel. Pleasant dreams."

He watched her up the stairs, and then the smile died from his face and he sighed. "How many parts we play!" he thought.

He turned down the gas, put on his hat, and went out to continue his search. But the image of his forlorn and lovely young guest filled his mind.

CHAPTER IX.

HE could not bear to leave all to Dorset's affection for his daughter. "He is a brutal fellow," he thought, "perhaps he doesn't care for her." For Ethel had been at his house for over a week and yet no tidings. Perhaps he had gone crazy; perhaps he feared Patrick had divulged more than he had, and so was afraid to return.

In that case how long was his mother to be kept a prisoner? and a prisoner where?

"If I had him," thought Marlow, clenching his hands, "I'd choke the breath out of him."

The search for Patrick had been as unavailing as that for his mother or Dorset. All had vanished.

He spent half the night in searching the purlieus of the town for Patrick, but he searched in vain. The next morning he took his solitary breakfast before Ethel was up, and hurried off to see Appler before office hours.

He had gone to see Mr. Perkins the day after he had taken Ethel home, but Mr. Perkins had gone off to Cincinnati on business, and had not yet returned. And now Appler strongly advised against telling him about her, since the two brothers were at variance.

"It would only complicate matters," the detective said, "besides being bad for the girl, for that trifling lover of hers—who I believe never did mean her any good—has been round to headquarters to secure a detective to hunt her up, and if he finds her at your house there would be trouble enough. Don't let her go down town where he can see her."

"But she must go out sometimes," said Marlow; "I can't keep her a prisoner."

"Let her go out in the dusk of the evening with that servant woman. I judge her something of a dragoness."

"She is in that line," said Marlow, half smiling.

"For that reason don't send for the girl's clothes, but get her new ones. I tell you she is the strongest card with her father; I wouldn't lose her for anything."

"Suppose I warn her then not to go very far from home. I might tell her Jeffreys is after her."

"Well, you are a goose," said Appler, losing his temper. "Anyone can see, Mr. Marlow, you know nothing about women. You couldn't take a better plan to make her fly to him. Let her think he has cast her off, for he really means her no good. In hiding her you are saving the girl from a rascal, so salve your tender conscience with that thought."

"But what excuse can I have to keep her shut up?" said Marlow, annoyed at the other's manner.

"Does she show any disposition to go out?"

"None."

"Then encourage her staying in. Give the servant woman a hint. Trust a woman any time for that sort of thing. Let her take her to walk in the dusk of the evening, and don't you be ever seen with her."

When he went home that evening, Ethel met him with a half sad smile of welcome. Looking so helpless and so young in her simple school-girl dress, and her hair plaited down her back, again the feeling of pity possessed him, and he greeted her very kindly though very gravely.

"I fear you have passed a dull day," he said, noticing that her eyes still bore marks of tears.

"I can't help crying," she said, sadly, "not but what I feel you are very kind, but I can't help feeling so unhappy about papa. I know something must have happened to him or

he would not keep away from his little girl."

Marlow ground his teeth and was silent.

Ethel wept softly to herself, but, at last, chilled by his silence, dried her tears and sat mute and down-cast.

"It is very terrible," Marlow said, his conscience smiting him for his lack of sympathy. "I know exactly how you feel."

"It is the frightful uncertainty," said the girl in a broken voice, forced to speak in her hunger for sympathy. "If I only knew I think I could nerve myself to endure the worst. But this uncertainty is worse than death. I think sometimes it would be an inexpressible relief to even know that papa was dead. I do not believe that he has an enemy on earth, and how could he? He was so good and kind to all! If he is alive he must be out of his mind, else he would never leave his girl so long."

"I have heard," she continued, as Marlow remained silent, "that sometimes people's minds are wiped out without a minute's notice, and he had been very much worried of late, perhaps it was that. And to think of him in that state, a wanderer on the face of the earth!—no one knowing him or caring for him!—perhaps cruel or wicked people ill-treating him!—thrusting him into prison as a vagrant or into an asylum—dreadful asylums!—to be swallowed up and lost to me forevermore! It breaks my heart! It breaks my heart!" she cried, wringing her hands in her despair.

"Don't think of it! Don't think of it!" said Marlow, shuddering, for the picture she drew came home to him.

"Ah, how cruel I am, when you are in the same state!"

"You have described better than I could my own feelings," said Marlow, hoarsely. He covered his eyes with his hand, while his breast heaved.

She impulsively stroked the hand that rested on his knee. Marlow took it in his, and after a desperate struggle recovered his composure.

"Pardon me," he said, "I don't often break down this way."

"I don't wonder you break down. You give yourself no rest. It was long after midnight when you came home, and you were gone betimes this morning."

"And how did you know that?"

"I heard you."

"Then you did not sleep either?"

"Not very much. I have terrible thoughts, and I see such frightful sights night and day," her lips quivered.

"Poor child! poor child!" he said, and he forgot the father.

"I see such terrible things," the girl went on at last, finding it a relief to speak, "that if I knew papa was dead—not dead as they keep telling me—but dead and buried somewhere, where I could go and sit by his grave and dress it with flowers and think of all his past life, so good and noble, and kind to all, I would be almost happy."

Marlow rose abruptly, and walked

the floor. This was unendurable. These panegyrics on that scoundrel! and he forced to listen and assent to them, and with his own heart tortured with anxiety for his mother! Oh, he couldn't, and he wouldn't!

"The scoundrel!" he uttered between his clenched teeth.

"To put my head down on his grave and whisper to him," continued poor Ethel, who felt that on this point there was entire sympathy between her and her host.

Of the other sorrow that was nearly killing her, her heart was too sore to speak, and certainly not to him would she ever open her lips. To her father she must, but no one else.

"Just as I manage to forget it, she dashes it back in my face," thought Marlow, as he crossed the room to and fro with long strides. Then he turned abruptly to her:

"My dear little girl," he said, imploringly, "don't let us talk any more about that; I cannot bear it. We harrow ourselves up."

Ethel was surprised, disappointed, she felt intensely hurt.

Marlow came and seated himself by her. "Men and women are different," he said; "women seem to derive a certain comfort from going over and over their troubles, but if a man were to do that he would go raving mad. I try to forget mine; I try to throw it behind me, else I could not do my work. Do I hurt you, little one?" as she remained silent.

"I am not a child, I am grown," she said, haughtily.

"Are you grown? I thought you were on the debatable ground, where the brook and river meet," said he, smiling.

"No, I have crossed the river," she said sadly.

"Try not to dwell so constantly on the thought of your father, for fear you would meet the fate you so dread for him—go mad."

"Oh, that would be terrible!" she shuddered.

"Don't be alarmed. You are brave and strong though you look so frail and slight, and have endured what would have driven many a man to frenzy or suicide. But, little one, don't strain your nerves too far. Strive not to think; try to forget."

"I cannot; I have nothing else to think of," she said mournfully.

"Can't you read?"

"I can't keep my mind fixed on a book."

"Sing then; practise your music."

"For whom?" she asked with a sorrowful smile, that told Marlow he had made another blunder.

"I would love to hear you," said he gently.

She shook her head. "Not yet, my voice is out of tune. I've cried so it is all choked with tears."

"Poor little girl! Poor little girl!" said Marlow, filled with a great pity, as he stroked her hair.

He was playing with edged tools!

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Marlow returned home the next evening the dreary stillness of the house was broken by the notes of the piano. How mournfully it sounded! Then Ethel's voice chimed in:

"O had I the wings of a dove,
Then would I fly away and be at rest."

The voice wailed out like the cry of a crushed and bruised spirit. At last it sank and died away, and her head drooped on her breast. Marlow stood in the parlour, unseen, unheard; then his voice broke the stillness:

"My poor child! is it as bad as that?"

The girl started. "I did not know you were there," she said.

"I have just come in and heard you."

"I could not help it. It spoke my feelings."

"You have, indeed, been beaten of the windy storm and tempest, but I hope your troubles will soon be over."

Ethel arose from the piano. "I have no hope," she said, shaking her head mournfully as she moved away.

Days lengthened into weeks, but still nothing was heard of the missing parties. Ethel had ceased to speak of her father to Marlow, seeing it was a painful subject; and Marlow was fast forgetting that she was his enemy's daughter.

As for his own mother, he had exhausted every effort to find her and

though he and Appler still kept up the search and followed every clue that came in their way, both she and Patrick seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth.

"I am sorry for you, Mr. Marlow," said Appler; "we can but wait, sir."

And while waiting Marlow tried not to think, for it made him so nervous he could neither eat nor sleep, and it began to tell on his health.

In this emergency Ethel contributed greatly to his comfort—she took his mind off himself. He was equally efficacious to her; stunned as she was by her lover's vileness, he kept her faith in mankind from dying out. Her love, her admiration for Jeffreys had vanished, crushed out of her at one blow, but with them it seemed as if her very soul would part from her. The daily presence of Marlow and his persistent cheerfulness saved her from a hopeless melancholy. Jeffreys had again and again advertised for her, but Marlow carefully hid the papers, till one morning when coming in to breakfast he found her reading a paper he had thrust behind a sofa.

"I missed several of these papers," said she, "for I make a constant study of the advertisements, and here I find them stowed away under the sofa." She was trying to appear calm, but she was greatly excited.

"Have you found anything that interests you?" he said, feigning an unconcern.

"Yes;" she looked him full in the face and saw that he knew.

"Will you answer it?"

"Not for worlds!" she shuddered.

"I think you are wise. Here, drink your coffee, and try and forget."

"You talk as if memory was an effort of will."

"Well, it is in a great measure. We can harp on a thing till it becomes a mania. We can resolutely banish it till at last from force of habit we cease to think of it and it fades away."

"Do you really think that possible?"

"Try it and see."

"It is terrible," said the girl, still all in a quiver, "to make us idols and to find them clay!"

"It must be," said the unsympathetic Marlow, buttering his toast.

"Did you never think any one great, grand—a perfect hero, and find them"—she paused—"find them all that was bad?"

"Never."

Ethel looked chilled at his lack of sympathy. Marlow smiled.

"My dear little girl," said he, "I am not enthusiastic. I don't think anybody great and grand."

"Not even your father?"

"Not even my father," said Marlow, his face becoming grave.

"But suppose it was a woman," said Ethel, "and you thought her all that was lovely and good, and she was all that was ugly and bad."

"That would be awful," said he.

"But what would you do?"

"I would strain every nerve and fibre and tear her out of my heart and throw her memory behind me."

His face looked quite stern, and Ethel felt that he meant it, and was a little startled. She had never seen this phase of his character before.

"You don't know that you could do it," she said.

"Yes, I do; she would simply not be the woman I had loved, and I would cease to care for her, and cast her memory from me."

He went down town and left Ethel ruminating on what he had said. Rousing herself at last, she opened the piano and tried to play and sing, but her voice did not sound well. Then she hunted about for a book to read.

In a library-case in the dining-room she found Tennyson's *Idyls*. She opened the book and tried to read it. It was a long time before her mind, long on the rack, could fix itself on anything, but after many efforts she became absorbed in the melancholy story of Elaine. When Marlow came home he found her with the book in her hand.

"Ah, you have been reading," said he, well pleased.

"Yes, and such a pretty story, about Elaine and Sir Lancelot, and the Holy Grail that the knights were in pursuit of. I love to read about Sir Galahad. Do you think there are many men like him?"

"Not many, but certainly some."

"And Sir Lancelot? striving to do good and failing?"

"Many more like him."

"And Sir Gawain? only wishing to do good."

"Oh! a great many more like him."

"I have always regarded it as a sort of allegory of this life," she said, "of the constant struggle of the

human soul upward and onward. In some the soul only faintly moves. In others it struggles and fights. Others, like Sir Galahad, press on and on, higher and higher, Heaven opening to them here below—showing them yet greater joys until, at last, they grasp the Holy Grail—the end of their human course—their reward in Heaven!”

As she spoke, her face beamed, and her eyes grew luminous.

Marlow felt awed before this creature from another world; he felt as standing on holy ground.

The girl sank into silence and seemed wrapt in thought; at last she returned to earth, and said:

“I fear I am very bold and forward to advance my views to one so much older and wiser.”

“Older, but not wiser. You have opened a new field to me, one I have never seen before.”

She seemed a little embarrassed by her burst of feeling, and soon went upstairs.

“What a strange mixture!” Marlow thought, when he was alone. “Half a woman, half a child!—better say half an angel! How unlike the girl of the period! How strange that she should be Dorset’s daughter! She would make a good race for the Holy Grail.” He revered his enemy’s daughter.

When he went to sleep that night he was still thinking of his guest, and when he awoke the next morning he laughed at the queer dreams he had had.

“I declare,” said he “one would

suppose I had been saying the old childish rhyme:

“‘Four corners to my bed,
Four angels round my head.’

“such a legion of them seemed to surround me.”

And all of them wore Ethel’s lovely face.

She came down to breakfast in the morning in a white muslin wrapper, with delicate ribbons. Sarah had spent her own money for these; the wrapper she had fished out of the trunk of cast-off finery and had done over. In this costume she looked like a lovely blossom, and Marlow viewed her with fresh admiration.

She brightened up the table and gave him a good appetite for his breakfast. The coffee tasted sweet for her pouring. And Sarah, as she flitted round the room on one pretext and another, thought:

“What a pretty, innocent little creetur! and Master Alex himself, how gumpus he is!” By which she meant a heavy style of innocence.

In spite of Ethel’s loveliness, Marlow was beguiled away from contemplating it by the charms of the morning paper. It was his bachelor habit to read it at breakfast.

First down the columns of personals ran his eye as it had been doing for months. He started as read:

“Ethel—Come to your anxious, unhappy father—T. D., 45, St. George Place.”

Marlow started violently; the paper

fell from his hand. As he met Ethel's grave eyes he hastily stooped to pick it up.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Nothing," he answered, "nothing," as he hastily rose and left the room, taking the paper with him. Snatching his hat he hurried from the house.

What could be the matter? Ethel wondered what had he seen in the paper? Probably something about his mother.

Boarding the nearest street car Marlow hurried off. "Let me get ahead of her," he thought, or she will utterly handicap me."

As he went along he felt almost wild. Now he would find out about his mother. Now he would take his enemy by the throat and say: "Wretch! Monster!" Here Ethel's image rose before him; his imaginary grip on his enemy's throat slackened. No, he would do him no violence, but he would say, "Release my mother and go! Leave this country at once, before I hand you to the police! Here, take your child." Oh! to think of that pure, innocent creature given over to the tender mercies of that wretch who had deserted her for so long!

So his distracted mind wandered round and round. Yes, he would tell him what he thought—what he deserved—what he would have done to him but for his daughter—for her sake—to save her shame, he would refrain from handing him over to justice—to save—

Here he reached St. George Place; he found 45 and rang the bell.

Of the servant who answered the bell, Marlow inquired for Mr. Dorset. The servant looked a little puzzled.

"The new lodger, I suppose," she said, and ushered him into a neat sitting-room where a man was taking a comfortable breakfast.

It was not Dorset, but—Jeffreys!

He looked up in surprise.

"There is some mistake here," said Marlow, "I wish to see Mr. Dorset in answer to his advertisement in the *Herald*."

"Yes," said Jeffreys, "I put in one. What do you know of the young lady?"

"You are not Dorset," said Marlow, not noticing the question.

"Of course not, but I am his friend and agent. But who are you? What is the young lady to you?"

"Nothing," said Marlow. "But I wanted to see Mr. Dorset, and seeing the advertisement I answered it. Can you tell me where he is?"

"Not at present," said Jeffreys, hesitatingly. "But," he persisted, "who are you?"

"That is none of your business," said Marlow, losing his temper, being provoked beyond measure to find he had fallen into a trap.

"Then can you tell me where Miss Dorset is?" Jeffreys continued, ignoring the other's rudeness.

"That is none of your business either," said Marlow, doggedly.

"It is my business. The young lady is my affianced wife."

"Indeed! After that affair at the hospital I think you will find your-

self mistaken," said Marlow, contemptuously.

"Who are you?" Jeffreys again repeated, alarmed to find the stranger posted about him.

"One who knows you well," said Marlow, grimly.

"I believe that you have abducted the girl, and I will have you arrested," cried Jeffreys, full of jealous rage.

"And how dare you advertise under another man's name? I believe you are trying to abduct the girl," retorted Marlow, grimly.

"I will send for a policeman," said Jeffreys, half rising and extending his hand toward the bell, "and have you arrested as a suspicious character."

"I would advise you to do it," said Marlow, contemptuously. "You would make a pretty figure in a police court! you who go about preying on helpless, defenceless women. But know, once for all, that Dorset's innocent young daughter is well protected and beyond your reach, and should you dare to trouble her you will be severely dealt with."

"I will not stand such language; it is insufferable!" cried Jeffreys, incensed but alarmed.

"Your bluster will not go down with me," said Marlow, sternly; "and if that advertisement ever appears again, I will have you arrested for using another man's name with the intention of abducting his daughter."

Before Jeffreys could recover his astonishment, Marlow had left the

room, full of rage and disappointment. He hurried away before his anger got the better of him, for he was aching to take Jeffreys by the throat. He was wild with jealous fury, but he did not know it, and thought he was actuated by stern justice.

"I am glad Ethel did not see the paper, and she shall not, either," he thought. "And I'll go and see Appler before he meddles and makes a mess."

"Well!" cried the detective, as Marlow burst into his office, "I have been waiting for you; thought you would be here every minute."

"About that advertisement? I've been to St. George Place."

"Already? You are quick on trigger!"

"Yes, I wanted to have it out with Dorset alone. But it wasn't he; 'twas Jeffreys hunting for Miss Dorset. She wouldn't answer his advertisement, so he tried her father's name."

"And you had it out with him?"

"I did," said Marlow sternly. "I told him to take that advertisement out, and keep it out, and to meddle with her at his peril."

"That was well done, Mr. Marlow," said the detective. "It makes me think better of my species to meet a man like you; I see so much of the bad side."

"Worthless wretch!" cried Marlow indignantly, indifferent to the compliment, "to be hunting down a helpless creature like that!"

"Just so! just so!" said Appler.

Marlow went off to cool down at

his leisure, without the vaguest idea of what was the matter with him.

After he was gone, Appler laughed, and shook his head.

"Over head and ears in love with his enemy's daughter! and as jealous as a Turk! Well, human nature is a queer thing!"

CHAPTER XI.

MARLOW having left the house, taking the paper with him, Ethel lamented the loss, as every morning she carefully examined the personals. So, when Sarah went to market, she begged to go with her that she might buy a paper on the way. Sarah graciously acceded, and they sallied forth.

On reaching the market, Ethel went to an adjacent news stand, bought a *Herald*, and eagerly scanned the advertisements.

Sarah, absorbed in solving the problem concerning the freshness of green peas and strawberries, was startled presently by a great pull on her skirt, and turning, saw Ethel pale and breathless with wildly dilated eyes.

"Read this!" she gasped.

Sarah snatched the paper and read the advertisement that had so startled Marlow.

"I am going now," said Ethel, all in a quiver. "Good-bye, Sarah."

"Stop, stop," said Sarah. "Wait till I put down my basket."

"You needn't go," said Ethel. "I can find the place."

"But I promised Master Alex not to let you out of my sight, and I must keep my word," and she followed.

Ethel hardly heard her; she was out on the street looking for a car that would take her to St. George Place.

She made the trip in breathless silence, her mind in a whirl, reading and re-reading the advertisement. Thankful that he was alive, anxious to learn the cause of his absence, shrinking from telling all that had happened in her own painful history. How could she tell him about Jenny? How could she mention another name that her outraged pride had forced her to thrust behind her?

At last the house was reached and Ethel rang the bell nervously.

"Mr. Dorset in?" she cried, breathlessly, as the servant opened the door.

"Yes, he was in," and the servant lead the way.

Jeffreys had not yet recovered from Marlow's visit; he was still smoothing down his ruffled plumage, and planning some way to discover who he was, and so find Ethel, when the door opened.

"Two ladies to see Mr. Dorset," announced the servant.

"Papa! papa!" cried Ethel, running into the room. "Dear papa! where have you been so——"

She staggered back as Jeffreys faced her.

"You!" she gasped, recoiling.

"Ethel, dearest!" cried Jeffreys, advancing with outstretched hands.

But Ethel waved him off.

"Papa," said she, faintly. "Where's papa?"

"I only wish I could tell you, my darling."

"The advertisement"—she began, holding up the paper.

"I put that in," said Jeffreys, having the grace to look ashamed.

"You?" she said in bitter disappointment, and burst into tears.

"Don't! don't! my darling," cried Jeffreys, trying to enfold her in his arms.

But the girl recoiled. "Oh, papa! papa!" she moaned.

"Forgive me, Ethel, but I was desperate," said Jeffreys, his ardour cooled by her aversion. "I was desperate at your loss. When that vile woman drove you from your home, I went wild to think of my sweet one wandering homeless on the street——"

"Stay!" cried Jeffreys, advancing with outstretched hands as she turned to go; "Stay, love."

"Don't touch me!" said the girl, recoiling. "Don't touch me!"

"Where are you going?"

"To seek my father."

"Then we will go together."

"Oh no! Oh no!" Ethel shuddered and moved towards the door, on the outside of which Sarah stood from motives of delicacy, but hearing every word through a crack.

"Why, where are you going, love?"

"I am going away," said Ethel, in a quivering voice.

"Indeed, you shan't," said Jeffreys, springing forward to intercept her. "I have you now, and I mean to keep

you, my pretty runaway. Do you think I took the trouble to advertise for nothing?" and he tried to catch her in his arms.

Ethel uttered a faint cry and struggled to pass him.

"Nay, my pretty one, you are mine now," said Jeffreys.

But he reckoned without his host, for the door flew open and Sarah entered. She was a tall, strong, raw-boned woman, and no mean match for most men. She cast her eyes about for a weapon of war and they fell on a handsome, large bronze inkstand on the table. Sarah grasped it and advanced on the enemy.

"Don't you touch her!" cried Sarah, "or I throw this on you!"

"Who are you?" asked Jeffreys, taken aback.

"It's none of your business who I am. But I'm an honest woman, and I don't propose to have her imposed on by the likes of you."

"Begone out of my rooms!" cried Jeffreys, in a rage, "or I'll turn you out."

"Begone, yourself!" said Sarah, in a passion, "or I'll knock you over with this inkstand."

She looked quite capable of carrying out this threat and Jeffreys did not care to catch an ink deluge.

"Go to the door, Miss Ethel, while I guard the way," said Sarah.

Ethel obeyed.

"Stand still," said Sarah to Jeffreys, "or I'll throw this inkstand on you if you move an inch."

"What do you mean by this insolence, you harridan?" said Jeffreys,

wild with rage at his ridiculous position.

"Harridan yourself," retorted Sarah, indifferent to grammar.

Jeffreys was forced to stand still and let Ethel walk out of the room; he did it the more quietly as he reflected that he could very easily follow them and see where they went. And he had sufficient manhood to dread a personal scuffle with a woman.

But on this occasion he reckoned without his host. Ethel safe out the door, Sarah hurled the inkstand at his head; of course she missed her aim, being no marksman, but the stand gave him a sounding thump in the breast which staggered him and the ink deluged his shirt front.

"Wretch!" cried Jeffreys.

But before he could rally from the blow, Sarah had darted from the door, pulling out the key as she went. In vain he struggled at the knob; Sarah held fast on the other side, till Ethel turned the key and locked him in.

"I'll show you that an honest woman is a match for no end of rascals," Sarah shouted through the keyhole, and departed, snorting defiance.

Ethel shook as with an ague all the way home, and on reaching that haven flew to her room, threw herself on the bed and wept bitterly.

"Oh, papa! papa!" she sobbed.

But the tears flowed not only for the father that was lost, but for a love that was dead and buried.

Marlow was furious when he learned from Sarah of all that had happened.

"The scoundrel!" he muttered, full of impotent rage.

Poor Ethel was pale and tear-stained when she came to dinner.

"My dear little girl," said Marlow, sympathetically, "I am so distressed at what has happened. I went myself to see him this morning and hoped to save you from this meeting—this disappointment."

"You are very kind," said Ethel, in a faint little voice: she had wept till she could hardly speak. "And I am very grateful."

"Don't, don't," said Marlow. "Remember, 'tis my duty to protect you. I promised to——" he paused.

Ethel smiled, and under Marlow's gentle, almost tender manner, cheered up and spent the evening almost pleasantly. She went to bed feeling far happier than she dreamed she could after her morning's adventure.

But Jeffreys was by no means done with her. Opposition only roused him to be more determined. He sought the services of a detective, and while consulting with him at the office, saw Marlow go into Appler's private office.

"Who is that man?" Jeffreys asked.

"That is Mr. Marlow, the man whose mother disappeared so mysteriously, and of whom nothing can be heard."

"He is the very man I am after. I wish him shadowed. I suspect that he has something to do with the disappearance of Dorset's daughter. Dorset himself disappeared some time since. The young lady vanished

from the house of her father's housekeeper, in whose charge she was, and only to-day did I succeed in getting any clue to her, and only then by advertising in her father's name. This Marlow answered, and when he found he had fallen into a trap, furiously abused me. I have reason to believe he knows where the girl is, and is hiding her."

Jeffreys thought it best to say nothing of his interview with Ethel, for the present, at least. "Where does Marlow live?"

"I don't know, exactly, but I can easily find out."

"Do so, and see if the girl is concealed there."

"Call to-morrow and I can let you know," said the man.

Jeffreys did so, and was given Marlow's address, and the information that the young lady was staying with his housekeeper.

"A likely tale," said Jeffreys, full of virtuous indignation. "But I'll let Miss Dorset's relatives know; they are half frantic with grief."

In the detective's varied experience, Jeffreys' statement was nothing uncommon, and Jeffreys hurried away to reconnoitre and decide on his plan of action.

While he stood across the way, glowering at the lonely, deserted-looking house, the austere and warlike Sarah came out, and went down the street with a basket in her hand. She had forgotten the celery for dinner, and was hurrying to repair her error.

"Now," thought Jeffreys, quite

shrewdly, "this is my opportunity. That old cat has gone off on some business, and 'tis not time for the young rascal to return. Probably Ethel is alone in the house. Now is my chance."

So he boldly crossed the street and rang the bell. After a little delay Ethel herself answered it.

"You are early," she said, with a glad smile! but, as she saw Jeffreys, she started back with a little cry.

"You thought I was Marlow," he said, with a bitter sneer, as he pushed his way into the hall and closed the door.

Ethel recoiled with horror at sight of him; all the frightful past rose up, and she shuddered.

"I have come for you, my sweet one," said Jeffreys, ignoring her dismay. "Mrs. Ramsay is half frantic about you."

"I will never go near her again," said the girl, "after her cruel treatment of me."

"I do not blame you," said Jeffreys; "but the poor woman was mad. But do not blame me along with Mrs. Ramsay, I am innocent."

"You!" cried the girl, looking at him with indignant eyes. "You!"

"Yes, what have I done?" he said, advancing towards her with outstretched hands.

"Don't touch me!" cried the girl "Don't touch me! Your touch is pollution."

"What folly is this?" cried Jeffreys angrily.

"Folly!" repeated Ethel indignantly. "Folly! How dare you

come near me after poor Jenny's death? Do you think I will ever forget it? Her cries ring in my ears day and night."

"Jenny was delirious, and knew not what she said," Jeffreys answered, with a scowl.

"But I remember your guilty looks," said the girl coldly.

Jeffreys stood amazed; the child had turned into the woman—and such a lovely one! He was more than ever determined not to give her up.

"All this talk is simply folly, Ethel," said he, looking at her with an air of virtuous indignation. "Who has put all these ugly notions in your head? It shows plainly that all of your associates are not of the best. Your father would be shocked, indeed, to hear that you were staying here alone in the house with Marlow, an unmarried man of bad char——"

"I am not alone," Ethel interrupted him. "Sarah is here, a good respectable woman—far better than Mrs. Ramsay, with whom papa left me. And as for Mr. Marlow—no brother could be kinder, and he has promised to be a brother to me till papa returns."

"Brother," cried Jeffreys, with a derisive laugh, "is that his dodge? Know, my pretty one, that your name will be ruined—irretrievably ruined—if you remain here. Your own father will turn you from his door on his return."

"That is false, and you shall not speak against papa," said the girl, trembling with excitement. "Go away and leave me!" she cried, "I

cannot bear to look at you!" and she averted her head, shuddering.

"I will not go," said Jeffreys, full of jealous rage. "I see Marlow's hand in all of this. But you shall not stay here with him, mad, infatuated girl! I have some regard for your reputation if you have not, and you shall go with me! Think you I will be balked after all these years of waiting? That I will let you slip through my fingers thus? Go with me you shall, or I will have your lover arrested for abduction, and you shall figure in the police courts in no pleasant light."

Half of his threats were lost on the girl, who was too densely innocent to take them in. But she resented what she understood.

"He is my brother! my good kind brother! and you shall not talk of him so."

"Your brother!" cried Jeffreys, with an ugly smile. "If he isn't your lover, who is?"

"I want no lover!" cried the girl, shivering. "I want no lover! Go away and leave me! Go away and leave me!"

"I never will. When I leave this house you shall go, too. I am resolved."

"I won't go!" cried Ethel. "I will stay here with Sarah."

"Sarah! Marlow you better say. But you shall not stay here to disgrace yourself. Come, leave this house this instant! I feel responsible to your father for you, and you shall not stay here to disgrace him!"

Stung, humiliated at his language,

Ethel stared at him with widely dilating eyes.

Jeffreys took advantage of her confusion to seize her arm and attempt to pull her towards the door.

"Come at once! You shall not stay here with this low fellow."

"Let me go! Let me go!" cried Ethel, struggling to free herself.

The hall door opened and Marlow entered.

The next instant a vice gripped Jeffreys' throat; then he was hurled across the hall and fell against the wall.

CHAPTER XII.

"Dog!" cried Marlow, beside himself with rage.

Then fearing to trust himself farther, he opened the hall-door.

"Go!" said he, "before I murder you."

"I won't!" said Jeffreys, as he rallied from the shock. "The girl is mine and you shall not——"

Marlow waited to hear no more; he seized Jeffreys by his collar, and in spite of his resistance, jerked him to the door and kicked him down the steps.

"Try this again, and I hand you to the police," he said, as he shut the door.

He was still quivering with rage as he approached Ethel, who crouched in a corner, trembling and crying.

"Did he hurt you, my darling little girl?" he said, anxiously.

"No, no, only he terrified me."

He led the frightened girl to a sofa in the parlour and seated himself beside her.

"Now tell me," said he, soothingly, "how did all this happen? How did he get in?"

"Sarah went out and I answered the bell, and he came in. I thought it was you. And he said I had no business here—that it was wrong for me to stay here with you."

"Scoundrel!" muttered Marlow between his teeth.

"Tell me," cried the girl, "you who are so much older and wiser than me—tell me, is it wrong? Ought I to go and stay somewhere else?"

"Wrong? Of course not! And where else could you stay? where else would you be safe from that fellow?"

"Oh! I hate—I abhor him!" cried the girl, shuddering. "I feel as if he was poor Jennie's murderer!"

"He is a bad man," said Marlow, "and means you no good."

"Oh! I wish papa was here!" cried the girl, weeping.

"I will protect you till he comes," said Marlow, soothingly.

"I told him you were my brother, but he said you couldn't be," she sobbed.

"Couldn't be!" repeated Marlow. "No brother would do more for you than I would—all that I have is yours," cried he, roused out of himself.

"Ah! you are so sweet and good to me!" said she, gratefully. "And what can I do for you, my dear bro-

ther?" She took his hand and kissed it.

Marlow started. Something like an electric thrill passed over him. He hastily drew his hand away as if the touch of her lips hurt him. All at once his eyes were opened—he loved her!

He sprung from the sofa and paced the room, his thoughts in wild commotion. Ethel watched him, deeply hurt.

"Did I offend you?" she asked, her eyes filling.

"Offend me? No—but—I—it seemed like profanation, child, to touch my hand with your sweet lips."

"Oh, no; I wanted to show my gratitude to my brother."

"Brother, indeed!" he hated the name. Had he gone mad? Could he make love to the girl in his own house? She might not return it. It would not be decent. It would drive her away from the only shelter she had. He looked anxiously at the sad eyes watching him.

Besides — great Heaven! — How could he marry his enemy's daughter? — the abductor of his mother! — No, no! It was monstrous! He struggled fiercely with his folly, as he called it. At last his strong will asserted itself and calmed the tumultuous storm. He returned to the sofa, and seated himself beside her.

"My little girl," said he, gently, "'tis both my duty and pleasure to take care of you, and 'tis I who should be grateful to you for staying here and cheering me in this sad and lonely house."

She smiled. "You are very kind to put it so," she said.

"I put it as it is, and you will make my house your home till your father returns."

Till her father returned! At that moment he felt fiercely jealous of her father, and almost wished he would never return. He did not know himself; he felt like a man in a dream.

Marlow was not a society man. In pleasure, as men understood the word, he took no part. His mother had been intensely jealous of his ever caring for any woman but herself, and as he cared little for the society of ladies it had been no deprivation to him.

So he had had no flirtations, no entanglements, no wild oats. His life had been a dull, colourless one; and now, when he for the first time fell in love, it went hard with him.

When her father returned! Yes, he hoped he would never return! But if he should, what would he do? He could not say. He put the distasteful thought from him and lived in the present moment. The girl had bewitched him so that he did not know himself.

"You must make up your mind to be happy here," he said, aloud. "That is, as far as it is possible to be in your present anxious state."

"Thank you very much," said the girl, with a grateful smile. "I will try."

In this perturbed state he had gotten up and walked about the room; he now came back and sat beside her; he longed to touch her, to clasp her

hand, to put his arm about her, to strain her to his breast, to caress her; but the girl's innocent helplessness, her childlike confidence in him, barred the way; he dared not touch her.

When Sarah returned and heard of all that had happened, she flew into a passion, and used language unbecoming an austere spinster; calling Jeffreys by the name of so many animals that he might have represented a menagerie.

Warned by this accident, Marlow took precautions to prevent it in the future. He provided Sarah with a pass key so that she need never ring. And Ethel was forbidden to answer the bell. Having arranged this state of siege Sarah called them to dinner.

Marlow ate in silence, torn by contending feelings. Ethel wondered what was the matter; she was afraid to ask, so she kept looking wistfully at him, and every glance pierced his already wounded heart.

All unconscious of this, Ethel, on their return to the parlour, betook herself to the piano, and began playing little nocturnes and singing little snatches of song to herself; while Marlow paced the room in gloomy silence, struggling with conflicting emotions.

One moment he felt that he must tell how much he loved her—the next he reproached himself for his unmanly weakness, for if she did not care for him, his mad avowal would drive her from his roof to find shelter—where?—poor unprotected creature! No! never, never would he do such a thing.

"Dinna' ask me if I love you,
For I canna' tell.
Dinna' ask me if I love you,
For I love too well,"

sang Ethel. Marlow paused in his moody tramp to listen.

"Where did you learn that?" he asked.

"It was one of mamma's old songs. I learned it of papa."

Papa! always papa! He resumed his moody walk in silence.

Ethel felt that he had changed, and she soon left him, declaring that she was sleepy.

"I hope you will have a pleasant night," he said gently, at parting.

And Ethel left him feeling depressed.

Marlow paced the room the greater part of the night. What should he do? He saw now how gradual had been the feeling. He never dreamed that he loved her, till the mine, as it were, exploded beneath his feet. And now—how could he marry his enemy's daughter? The man who held his mother a prisoner!—he knew not where. He ground his teeth. No, he could not, he would not.

Then there rose before him a tall, slender figure, with wavy dark hair and lustrous eyes; a lovely fair face with scarlet lips—those sweet lips that had touched his hand—his hand!—his great muscular hand! He raised it and kissed where her lips had touched—and then blushed like a girl.

He slept but little, and in the morning took himself to task for last night's folly, as he called it; and, after

an early breakfast, left before Ethel was up.

By evening he felt sorry for the poor little thing, and bought her a great bunch of flowers—splendid Jacqueminot roses, and brought them back to cheer the poor child.

"Here, little girl," he said, as he entered the parlour.

Ethel received them with a glad cry. "Oh! how lovely! how good you are to me!"

Marlow smiled at her, tenderly, wistfully.

For a week the battle raged between Reason and Love, and finally ended the usual way. Every day Marlow brought a new present; fruit, flowers, books, music, anything he thought she would like. And Ethel, delighted, grateful, thanked him and depended more and more on him. Marlow lived in a fool's paradise and drank in every thought and word.

CHAPTER XIII.

"MASTER ALEX," said Sarah, "what did I tell you when that child came here? You have been steadily losing your mind for a week, and I tell you now, this is no place for her."

"Shall I turn her out of my house?"

"You can send her to some of her relations."

"She has none."

"She has an uncle."

"He went away."

"For all time?" asked Sarah, satirically.

"I can't send her away."

"Go and notify her uncle, and let him send for her."

"I will not trust the child to him."

"Are you going to marry her?" asked Sarah, calmly.

"Marry her? No!"

"Then is it right? Is it honest? Is it like you, Master Alex, to be courting her every day as you do?"

"I do not court her; I am simply attentive."

"Attentive! You are playing with fire! You'll break that poor child's heart before you know. Hasn't she suffered enough already? If you are not going to marry her—and I don't suppose you are at present—send her away before trouble comes. Listen to your old friend and servant."

Marlow made no answer, but turned and left the room and started upstairs. Ethel came running out of the parlour.

"Oh! brother," she cried, "what is the matter?"

How childish she looked in the white muslin, and how her address grated on his nerves.

"Nothing is the matter," said he shortly. "But don't call me brother."

She turned pale and drew up her head with a proud little gesture. Without a word she turned back into the parlour.

"What a brute I am," said Marlow, and, turning back, followed her.

"Ethel," he said.

But she closed the door in his face.

"Don't follow me," she said, in a tone he had never heard before. The key turned in the door and kept him outside.

He went up to his room, mortified, angry. Angry with himself; angry with Sarah for telling the truth.

"How brutal I was that a gentle creature like that should turn on me!" But he loved her all the more for her pride.

He passed a wretched night, torn by contending emotions. Love on one side; his sense of honour on the other.

Ethel did not come to breakfast, and Sarah again ventured to urge him to seek Mr. Perkins, and finally wrung a promise from him that he would.

Before his courage failed him, he hastened round to Mr. Perkins' house; it was a handsome building, and Mr. Perkins lived in considerable style. He had been a broker, but he had retired from business with quite a snug fortune, it was believed; though, on that point, Mr. Perkins was very chary of speaking—fearing he would be asked for help, Dorset used to say when in one of his sullen humours.

Mr. Perkins was a widower of many years' standing, and his family consisted of one son, a lad of fifteen years of age.

Marlow was ushered into the back parlour, and soon Mr. Perkins came out of his library. The three rooms all communicated; the parlours were handsomely furnished, and, as Mr. Perkins came out of the library,

Marlow could see the fine array of book-cases in that apartment.

Mr. Perkins met Marlow with great kindness. "Well," said he, smiling, "have you any good news for me?"

"Yes," said Marlow, "some that I expect will surprise you."

"Yes?" Mr. Perkins looked inquiringly.

"Your brother, Mr. Dorset, disappeared some time ago."

"True," said Mr. Perkins; "have you heard anything of him?"

"No, I only wish I could. But his daughter was turned out of his house by his vixen of a housekeeper, and I took the child home with me."

"Indeed!" Mr. Perkins looked genuinely surprised.

"I did not know what else to do; I could not let her wander on the street."

"True—but—why not come to me then?"

"I did, but you had gone to Cincinnati."

Mr. Perkins looked a little puzzled, but at last he said: "Ah! true: but that was quite a while ago."

"Yes," said Marlow; he was a poor hand to dissemble; he felt as if Mr. Perkins were reading him, as indeed he was. Then he said, "The man to whom she was engaged, has turned out quite a scamp," and he proceeded to give a brief sketch of the whole affair.

Mr. Perkins listened attentively. "Mr. Marlow," he said, "I thank you for your kindness to my niece."

"She is quite welcome to a home with me," said Marlow, with height-

ened colour. "But since Jeffreys has appeared, I fear it will be disagreeable for her, as he threatens to misconstrue everything. So I thought the safest place for her was the shelter of her uncle's roof."

"True," said Mr. Perkins. "I will see about having her taken care of; but I doubt if my house would be a suitable place for a girl, situated as she is, as I am absent much of the time and have in contemplation a trip to the Pacific slope. But I will write to some old friends of mine in Philadelphia, and put her with them."

"When shall I bring the child?" Marlow asked, his heart sinking into his boots.

"To-morrow, if it suits you and her, and I will take her to Philadelphia as soon as I leave."

Marlow's dismay was depicted in his face, and Mr. Perkins could with difficulty keep from smiling.

"Very well," said the young man, "I will tell Ethel, and——"

Here the door was burst open, and young Perkins entered.

"Why, Edgar!" said his father, "where have you been?"

"Round at the gymnasium practising," said the boy. "Hello! Mr. Marlow, is that you?"

"Where did you know Mr. Marlow? and how came you in such a heat?"

"Where did I know him?" cried Edgar gaily. "Round at the gymnasium. How came I in such a heat? Brandishing Indian clubs. Want to ask me any more questions, sir?"

"You are pert," said the father

with a smile. He was wrapped up in the boy—all on earth he cared for, people said who knew him well. And Edgar deserved the affection; bright, handsome, warm-hearted, clever, his quick wit and sunny temper attracted every one who knew him.

"It will make you ill," said his father, "taking such violent exercise this warm weather. Why! you are in a perfect heat now!"

"Oh, nonsense, father!" said the boy laughing. "Don't coddle me. Better be in a heat from exercise than be a dyspeptic like you. I can skin a cat and turn a summerset—back-handed summerset, better than any fellow of my age at the gymnasium—as well as any fellow of my age except Marlow—he can out jump, out run, out anything any of us!" cried the boy admiringly.

"What good does it do him?" asked the father.

"Good? Look at his muscle!" seizing Marlow's arm.

"Well, he is not going to be a prize fighter."

"And he don't have dyspepsia," retorted the boy. "Do you, Mr. Marlow?"

"Never," said the young man, smiling.

"Why do you never come to the gymnasium now?" Edgar asked.

"I have been busy taking another sort of exercise," said Marlow, his face becoming grave as he thought of the miles and miles he had tramped in his unprofitable search.

"You have heard nothing yet of your mother?" Mr. Perkins asked.

"Nothing."

"That is terrible."

"I did think I had a clue," said Marlow, and he told about Patrick.

"That looks very ugly, indeed," said Mr. Perkins; "as if you had some secret enemy. Do you suspect any one?"

"I have given no one cause to hate me," said Marlow, evasively.

"Well, Mr. Marlow, I'm awful sorry for you," said Edgar, with ready sympathy. He seemed very warm, and seating himself at the window, took up a Japanese fan and commenced fanning himself vigorously.

"You certainly did not come from the gymnasium in that heat?" asked his father.

"Bother the heat!" muttered Edgar. "No, sir," he said aloud; "I was practising Indian clubs in my room."

"In those clothes!"

"They are not hurt, sir."

"I was not thinking of the clothes—they are dripping wet, I have no doubt." The anxious father ran his hand under the boy's coat.—"Yes, just as I thought—soaking wet!—and you sitting in a draught! Go to your room this minute and change them."

"Don't make a baby of me, dad," said the boy, a trifle annoyed.

"Go this instant!" said his father sternly.

"I hate to be coddled!" said the boy angrily, as he walked to the door.

"Don't answer me up, sir! Go!" said the father, now roused.

The boy stood at the door pouting.

"His mother died of consumption, and I live in continual dread of it for him," said Mr. Perkins to Marlow. "And he seems to try himself to see how imprudent he can be."

The pout vanished from Edgar's face; he stole back from the door and stood behind his father's chair.

"Don't be worried," he said, stooping over and kissing him on the forehead. "I'll go right off and put on dry things—real bone dry." He laughed as he spoke and left the room. And Marlow heard him whistling gaily as he ran up the stairs.

"He's all I have, and I expect I'm foolish about him, and over anxious, and so try the poor boy's temper," said the father to Marlow.

"He is a splendid fellow, and worth all your affection," said Marlow warmly.

Mr. Perkins looked at him for a moment, and his face quivered; then he turned hastily away to hide his emotion and walked to the window.

"And this is the man whom most people call cold and unfeeling," thought Marlow! "How little do we know each other!"

"Bring my niece whenever you choose," said Mr. Perkins recovering his composure.

Marlow started as the unpleasant subject came back to him.

"Very well," said he abruptly, and left.

Mr. Perkins looked after him and shook his head. A long sigh escaped him.

CHAPTER XIV.

WHEN Marlow came home, Sarah drew him into the dining-room.

"Well," said she, "did you see Mr. Perkins?"

"Yes, and he says he can't keep the child. He will send her to some friends in Philadelphia. But I hate to have her knocked about among strangers."

"This is no place for her," said Sarah.

"If her uncle won't take her, I will find her a place here to stay."

But Sarah would not listen to this. "No, her uncle is the proper person to have her."

The dining-room door was open. In their excitement they spoke louder than they were aware.

Ethel started down stairs to make the peace. She had been very rude to her kind benefactor, she told herself. As she came, her ear caught her name and then the words:

"This is no place for her."

"If her uncle won't take her, I will find her a home elsewhere."

"She can't stay here."

"But there is no hurry," said Marlow.

"No hurry," repeated Sarah, "can you keep up this brother and sister farce?"

"No," said Marlow, bitterly, "I can't."

"Then let her go——"

But Ethel waited to hear no more. Maddened with grief and shame she

flew to her room. Hunting up her old dress, she put it on.

She would rid them of her! She would go if she had to beg her bread! And down stairs she crept.

Hearing a slight noise Marlow came out in the hall, and there stood Ethel, clad in the old suit, with the open door in her hand, about to go out.

"Why, Ethel," he said, "what does this mean?"

"It means," said the girl, "that I am going; that I will never be an unwilling dependant! I will go where you will never hear of or see me again!—Oh! why," she cried, as Marlow stood dumbfounded, "why did you not tell me you wanted me to go?—and not leave me to the shame of——" Her voice failed her—tears streamed down her face—she seized the handle of the door.

Then Marlow roused from his stupor and threw prudence to the wind. He suddenly caught her in his arms and strained her to his breast.

"I love you!" he cried, "you must not go!—you shall not go!—I love you—I cannot live without you—Don't leave me! don't leave me—Ethel, my darling, I love you! I love you!"

He covered her face, then her hands with which she hid her face, with his kisses; he was like one gone mad.

"Oh!" cried the girl at last, "don't! don't!"

Marlow slowly returned to his senses. He relaxed his grasp, and

Ethel stood trembling and breathless. Then she leaned against the wall, and covering her face, burst into tears.

Marlow stood before her, his broad chest heaving, struggling with himself to keep down his emotions. What had he done? How had he treated her? And what had become of all his fine resolutions?

"Ethel," he said at last, in a gentle voice. "Ethel, my darling, listen to me. Pardon my violence. Pardon it. I am ashamed of myself. But your sudden flight threw me off my guard. I have loved you for so long, Ethel. But I guarded my secret. I could not force my love on an unprotected girl under my own roof, lest if you could not return it, you could not stay, so I resolved to wait. But love laughs at rules! Then I thought to take you to your uncle, and safe with him I could urge my suit—but that cannot be—and just now I lost my control. But hear me, Ethel. I love you with all my heart—as I never loved woman before. But, my darling, if you can't love me, I will fight my hopeless passion, and, as brother, friend, guard and watch over you here under the shelter of my roof."

The girl was silent, but her sobs had ceased.

"Ethel, my darling, could you—could you—care for me?—if it were just a little? Could you give me just a little hope to live on? Look up, sweetheart."

Ethel timidly obeyed.

"I love you! I love you! Can you not love me?" he held out his arms. Ethel sank upon his breast and hid

her face there. Marlow held her close.

The next day, when Marlow had recovered his senses a trifle, he began to think what he should do about taking Ethel to her uncle. But before speaking to her he determined to go back and make a clean breast to Mr. Perkins, and see if some arrangement could not be made whereby Ethel could remain in the city during her uncle's absence in the West; some place where he could go and visit her.

Full of this idea he hurried to Mr. Perkins' house, only to find it in wild commotion. Edgar had been taken in the night with violent meningitis, and lay at death's door. The house was full of a suppressed confusion of servants running to and fro on tip-toe, and speaking with bated breath; of doctors coming and going and holding anxious consultations.

Mr. Perkins was all but beside himself, and of course could not see him. Marlow ventured to stop one of the doctors as he was going out and make some inquiries, and learned that the lad had overheated himself, and then chilled off suddenly, and meningitis was the consequence.

"It often attacks boys like him in the full flush of health and strength in consequence of some imprudence," said the doctor.

And Marlow thought of yesterday's scene.

"And is there no hope?"

"Little or none. The boy is unconscious. As a last resort the doctors are using a hot iron."

Here the sufferer's shrieks rang out through the still house and were echoed by the cries and sympathetic groans of his father from the library, where he lay on a sofa with his hands over his eyes. Marlow caught a glimpse of him as the door opened and the housekeeper came out.

"Oh, how dreadful!" cried the young man shuddering.

"The boy is really not conscious of any pain," said the doctor, "but his father won't believe it."

"I don't wonder," thought Marlow as he hastened away. He went downtown with a saddened heart. In spite of his new happiness, his thoughts constantly reverted to the dying boy.

He contented himself on his return with telling Ethel that her cousin was very ill.

"I am very sorry," said the girl, "but I hope now I won't have to go to my uncle's, for I don't like him."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I don't like him. Papa didn't like him either. They were always sparring, and he said uncle William always got the better of him; that even as boys grandmother would side with uncle William, as against him, and so got him many a whipping."

"I don't wonder," thought Marlow, "I dare say he deserved every cut he got." But aloud he said, "I am very sorry for the boy."

"I don't know him," said Ethel. "Papa would not let me play with boys. I wonder what he would say if he saw me now," she asked smiling, as she sat with her head resting

against Marlow's shoulders and his arms around her waist.

"That he approved, I hope," said Marlow gently, kissing her hand.

He could hardly yet believe his happiness; it was so new and strange to him; his life had been so bare of all events.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Ethel, looking up and wondering at his silence.

"Oh, how happy I am! oh, how much I love you! oh, how beautiful you are!" cried Marlow, his eyes beaming with love and happiness.

"Oh, what a goose you are!" said Ethel, smiling.

"If being happy constitutes a goose, then there was never a greater," said he.

"Such a foolish boy!" said the girl, with a happy smile, stroking his face. "Such a foolish boy!"

"Not as foolish as you think," said Marlow, drawing the caressing hand to his lips.

But how could he marry her, suspecting her father of his mother's abduction? Impossible! That must be cleared up first. What was Appler after? He would see him in the morning.

Marlow, on his way to the town next morning, stopped at Mr. Perkins' house; from the door floated a black and white streamer.

"Poor boy! Poor boy!" he thought, and entered to ask after Mr. Perkins.

"He was all but wild," said the servant, "the doctors had him in hand and he could see no one,"

Marlow remembered his sympathy for him in his trouble.

"Pray say to Mr. Perkins," he said, "if I can be of any service to him, call on me."

Before the man could reply, the library door flew open, and Mr. Perkins, in his restless march, came out. His face was drawn and his eyes wild. Full of pity Marlow approached him.

"Mr. Perkins," he said gently, "I feel for you from the bottom of my heart."

The wretched father looked at him in a dazed fashion, and then, as he recognized him, uttered a shriek, and retreated towards the library.

"Don't mind him," said the physician, who had followed him out, "he is almost crazed."

Full of pity, Marlow left the house and took his way to Appler's office.

"Appler," said he, "something must be done to find Mr. Dorset and my mother."

"Your mother and Mr. Dorset," thought the detective, involuntarily taking note that something had happened. "I have and am doing my best, Mr. Marlow," he said.

"But you do nothing," said Marlow, impatiently, "at least nothing comes of it."

"I am not a magician, neither am I a god," said Appler, provoked. "If the people have killed themselves, I can't find 'em."

"But there is Patrick," said Mar-

low, ignoring Appler's sombre suggestion, "you might at least find him."

Appler winced. Patrick had been a thorn in his side; he was very sore to think the man had escaped him without leaving a trace behind.

"It seems incredible," said Marlow, "that he should have gotten away from us. There was a blunder somewhere."

Having relieved his mind he departed, but every day for the next week he came back with the same cry, for Sarah was urging him to marry Ethel.

Marry Ethel! He would not, could not, till the suspicions about her father were at rest, though he would not tell Sarah this, for fear she should let it out.

He became more and more anxious, though he began to fear that it was a hopeless expectation. As for Dorset, one moment he longed to find him, the next he wished he would disappear for ever. It vexed him to think of Ethel as his child. "How is it possible?" he thought, looking at her pure delicate beauty and recalling Dorset's harsh face. "I don't believe it. I bet she is a foundling, or a child with no name he has adopted. Mercy knows I wish it was so, and I'd marry her to-morrow."

But how could he marry the child of his mother's abductor?—murderer, perhaps! He began to feel all on edge with suspense. Would it never end?

CHAPTER XV.

MARLOW's impatient reproaches rendered the detective desperate; he felt his reputation was at stake, and longed to solve the mystery.

The day after young Perkins' funeral, he was sauntering near the house of mourning, staring at the close shut doors and windows, as though he would extract some inspiration from their gloomy uncompromising aspect.

As he thus pondered, a Chinaman brushed past him and rung at the area door. The detective drew back behind the front steps and waited. Katy, the girl, opened the door, then slammed it in the Celestial's face.

"Cook!" she screamed, "Cook!"

The door flew open and cook came out.

"What do you want, you yellow haythen?" cried she, "that you come here again?"

"Monnee, monnee," said the Oriental.

"Don't come to me 'bout your money!" cried the irate domestic. "Who do you mean, and what do you want?"

"Me wantee bossee houssee."

"Bossee houssee?" repeated the mystified servant, while Katy stood convulsed with laughter. But cook saw nothing to laugh at. To her mind one of his words sounded more like hussy than anything else. "Be-gone!" said she harshly, "I dunno what you are talking about. Be off!"

"I wantee see bossee houssee," persisted the Celestial.

Cook was now convinced that this was a stupendous insult, and flew into a rage. "If you don't go away from here I'll call the police."

"No! no!" cried the almond-eyed foreigner, "I mussee see bossee houssee."

This was more than cook could stand. "Hussy! indeed! I'll teach you to call respectable women hussies!" she roared, snatching up an old boot and dealing the Chinaman one blow between the eyes. "Be-gone! you dirty haythen!" cried she.

The Celestial uttered a cry of mingled anger and alarm, and before he thought scratched cook's face severely with his Celestial nails, which were both long and sharp.

Cook yelled, Katy screamed, and the detective, alarmed at the outcry, sallied from his retirement and interfered.

"Come along! come along!" said he, seizing the Celestial's arm, "or the police will get you."

"Yes, indeed! they will," cried cook, "if I have a voice. "Police! police!" she yelled.

Then turning on the terrified Chinaman, she said, "What do you mean, you yellow haythen, by making all this trouble in a house of mourning?"

The Celestial was by this time thoroughly affrighted, and suffered the friendly interferer to drag him away, without saying aught but fragments of remarks, in which "monnee,

monnee," and "bossee houssee," were all that could be distinguished.

"Who did you wish to see?" asked the detective, when the couple had reached a safe distance, and the angry cook was lost to sight.

"Bossee houssee," persisted the Celestial.

"You mean Mr. Perkins?" asked Appler.

The other nodded.

"What do you want with him?"

"Bossee owe me monnee. He no payee."

"He is in a great deal of trouble just now," said the detective.

"So am me. He puttee sick man in my houssee; he say he payee me. I no lettee him gittee way. Sick man bellee sickee; he try runnee way. I watchee night and day. I no gittee payee. When I come for payee, drivee me way."

A vague suspicion arose in Appler's mind; he tried to draw out the Chinaman, but could find out no more than his first statement, so he was forced to content himself with escorting him home. Chung Lung lived on Mott Street, in an opium dive. As he went along, Appler tried to ingratiate himself with the Celestial by expressing his sympathy for the awkward fix he was in—and all for nothing.

"No talkee!" cried Chung Lung, "to takee caree man, and no gettee monnee—bellee bad."

"I'd turn him out."

Chung Lung shook his head. His anger was cooling, and his cunning was returning; and he regretted he

had spoken so freely before the stranger.

"The police would get after you if they heard about it."

"The police no knowee," cried Chung Lung, vehemently.

"It might get out."

"Nothing to gittee outee," said the Celestial, cunningly.

"Melican man sickee—bellee sickee. Chung Lung takee caree him. Melican no payee Chung Lung. How that hurtee Chung Lung?"

Appler meditated as he walked along, the Chinese eyeing him furtively. He might have the Chinaman arrested, but what could he prove? The fellow might deny all about it—Mr. Perkins certainly would. He might take him to the wrong place. Then it might not be Patrick, but some one else. But still it was worth investigating. This Chinaman was pluckier than the most of them, and he could see was getting restless under his espionage; he tried to soothe him.

"'Tis a burning shame," he said, "for men—and especially rich men—to take advantage of poor foreigners as they do. I wouldn't worry with his sick servant, but send him to a hospital."

Chung Lung shook his head.

"Couldn't," he said, briefly.

"Yes, you could. Perhaps I could put you in the way. Where is the man?"

But Chung Lung looked at him with his cunning smile, and shook his head without saying a word to commit himself.

"The sly heathen dog!" thought the detective, but his face remained unruffled.

"Melican man no goodee," thought Chung Lung, and he determined to rid himself of his new acquaintance.

At last they reached the Chinese quarter, and the Celestial began to look furtively about him for the means of escape.

The day was warm, and the detective thrust his hand into his pocket, and drew out his handkerchief to wipe his face. As he did so, he caught one end in his teeth and tore a piece out. Replacing the handkerchief, he thrust the piece into his vest pocket, plucked a pin from some part of his clothing, and stuck it near by, and, with a wary eye on his companion, kept close to him.

Suddenly Chung Lung darted into the first opium dive he came to; it was down in a cellar, and it was quite dark, though it was broad afternoon above on the street. As Appler followed his unwilling guide down the cellar steps, he quickly pinned the bit of white rag to the Celestial's overgarment, and by this white spot was able to follow him.

In and out, in and out, went Chung Lung; close after him followed the detective. From room to room he went, full of people from all nations and in various stages of intoxication. In some, preparing to get drunk, sitting about placidly smoking; in others, lying about in different stages of stupor; in others, suffering the horrors of awakening from their debauch.

This was no new sight to the detective, so he did not waste his time in gazing about him, but kept his eyes upon the Chinaman with the white patch, as he circulated about among his countrymen, waiting on their customers, looking as much alike as peas.

Leaning against the wall Appler followed Chung Lung with his eyes as he began to slacken his speed and double on his track, making his way toward the front room of the cellar.

As he left one room and passed into another, Appler followed him from afar till he once more returned to the entrance room, when the detective hastened his steps, and with a speed and activity not to be expected in one of his years, reached the street door a moment after Chung Lung darted out of it, and followed behind him as he scurried down the street. Keeping the fleeing Chinaman in sight, the detective followed him a block, and saw him dart into another cellar. To this he now hastened, and finding it to be another opium dive, concluded it was his own establishment, and noting the name and number the detective departed.

About nine o'clock Chung Lung was flitting about his dive congratulating himself on his narrow escape, cursing his folly in letting his angry passion rise and so nearly getting him into a scrape. He was a Celestial who was fond of gain, and there was very little that he would not do for money. He now darted about in high glee, waiting on his customers and occasionally taking a whiff at a pipe him-

self, when he was thrown into a flutter by a summons to the front of his den.

There stood a respectable middle-aged man in livery. He was a stout, portly man who carried himself with a swagger of importance. His hair and side-whiskers were black, and his complexion very dark. He handed Chung Lung a note, and gazed about him curiously as the Celestial read it with the help of two of his countrymen. It ran to this effect:

“CHUNG LUNG: I learn that either you or your messenger have been to my house to-day, and I was much displeased to hear of the disgraceful row that occurred. I send my servant to learn the true condition of the unfortunate man I left with you. Let him see him that he may report to me. I do not wish him starved or ill-treated. I do not care to be involved in a murder scrape. Let the man see him; also hand him your bill and he shall call to-morrow and pay it. Affliction in my family has prevented my attending to the matter before, and I am now sick myself.”

Chung Lung and his countrymen slowly spelled out this note; then the Chinese looked suspiciously at the messenger, who was gazing about as if he had never seen such a place before.

“Well now, John,” said the man, as the Celestial nervously pulled the note through and through his pointed fingers, “hurry up. What are you waiting for? I’ve no time to waste;

let me see the fellow and get away from here.”

But Chung Lung did not budge, but stood gazing anxiously at the messenger.

“What are you staring at? Have you killed him?” he asked, as the Chinaman still hesitated.

“No, no, me no killee him.”

“Have you starved him?”

“No, no, me no starvee.”

“Is he dying?”

“No, no.”

“Then, you yellow heathen, what’s the matter?”

“The monnee” — began Chung Lung, “the monnee——”

“Do you suppose my master is fool enough to pay you before he knows the man is alive?”

“No namee to this——” pointing to the note.

“Of course not. Do you think my master is a fool to put his name to paper for you to trade off to the police?”

“I no lettee you see the man, doubttee no namee to lettee.”

“If you don’t,” said the servant, angrily, “I’ll report you to the police—you have murdered the fellow—and have you arrested.”

Chung Lung still hesitated.

“I’m not going to waste my time on you, you heathen dog. I’ll go back to my master and report, and if anything happens to the fellow, he’ll put you in the hands of the police.”

Thus threatened, Chung Lung at last yielded, and unwillingly led the way to the back of a very capacious and rambling cellar. Like the first

den it was strewed with men, and women too, of the lowest order, lying about in all the stages of opium intoxication.

But the pretended servant viewed them with indifference as he followed Chung Lung, eyeing closely the different turns and corners of the way. At last the Chinaman stopped at a low corner room that was little else than a hole in the earth. Here on a mass of rags in the corner lay a man all but dying of neglect and debauchery. Opium had been given him freely, and he was on the rack for the want of it. He was too sick to leave his bed, and clamoured wildly for the drug, or anything to ease his misery.

"How long since he has had any?" asked the servant.

"An eternity! an eternity!" shrieked the frenzied wretch.

"How long, you yellow dog?" he repeated to the frightened Chinese.

"Yesterday — yesterday," cried Chung Lung, hurriedly. From his manner, the man knew it must have been much longer.

"Give me some at once."

"Monnee! Monnee!" cried the frugal Celestial.

"Here, I'll pay for a dose," said the man, taking out some change and handing it to him. "Go, get him some at once. Let me see him take it. I'm afraid to trust you. Leave the light! don't leave me here in the dark." Chung Lung obeyed, and hurried away.

"Now," said the pretended servant, bending over the frenzied creature,

"talk quick! Tell me who you are, and how you came here?"

"Take me away!" shrieked the other.

"I will. But answer me first, who are you?"

"Patrick O'Connor."

"How came you here?"

"I was put here!" cried the terrified wretch, "and threatened if I told, I would be murdered—and the Chinaman hired to keep me—and they starve me and drug me with opium—Oh Lord! Oh Lord! have mercy!—Oh! I'm dying!—Oh! what frightful things I see in the dark!—Oh! don't leave me!—don't leave me!"

"I must; I will go for help, and take you to the hospital."

"Swear it! swear it!" cried the frantic creature. "Swear it!"

"I swear it. Now, when he brings the opium, take it to quiet your nerves, till you can reach the hospital."

"I'm afraid to be left alone! Oh, don't go!"

"Then you can't be moved."

"How came you here?"

"You have friends who are looking for you."

"Friends! What friends?"

"Mr. Marlow."

"Mr. Marlow!—Mr. Marlow! him who I injured! Lord forgive me! Lord forgive!"

"Quiet yourself! Here comes the Chinaman."

Very unwillingly Patrick took a little of the drug.

"Now," said the detective, "leave the light with him. John, here," and

he handed him another twenty-five cents. "Keep him in lights and take good care of him till I return, when I will pay you in full."

"Me takee caree," cried Chung Lung, delightedly, and grinning.

Leaving Patrick wailing, the two returned to the front of the den. Once upon the street, Appler (for it was he) hailed the first hack that was passing and hurried off.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was near midnight when a hospital wagon stopped at Chung Lung's door. and two bearers and two policemen leaped out and entered. In vain the cringing, trembling Chung Lung protested there was no man there—it was all a mistake.

"See here," said Appler, taking him roughly by his queue. "Get out of my way before I kick you, and show me where that sick fellow is."

"No sickee fellee—no sickee fellee," cried Chung Lung.

The detective seized a lamp and, without a word, led the way through tortuous, damp and filthy passages, reeking of dirt and stenches. On and on he went till a faint glimmer of light showed where Patrick was concealed. The poor wretch was lying in a troubled sleep when they entered, but roused up as the bearers put him on a litter.

"Where am I? Where am I?" he asked wildly.

"With friends," said the detective. "Don't be frightened."

"Friends?" said the poor creature. "I didn't know I had one. Where am I going?"

"To the hospital. Lie still."

"He is in a critical state," said the doctor, surveying the man.

"Keep the life in him till morning, doctor," said Appler, "he is an important witness;" and he took his leave.

Early the next morning Appler rang at Marlow's door. Sarah answered, and on seeing who it was, discharged at him two double-barrelled sniffs.

"Good morning, Miss Allsright," said Appler, eager to be polite. "I want to see Mr. Marlow," as Sarah surveyed him with a stony glare. "Most disagreeable female!" thought he, a cold rill running down his back. "Cat, indeed! Worse than any cat!" he mused, as he followed her to the dining-room, where Marlow soon joined him.

"Patrick is found," said Appler, abruptly, "and is at the hospital."

"What!" cried Marlow. "And he says——?"

"He is too ill to say much. You must go to him as soon as they will allow visitors."

"How did you find him?"

Appler related his yesterday's experience.

"'Tis impossible for me to believe that Mr. Perkins had a hand in it!"

"Oh! he's in cahoot with Dorset."

"I can't believe that!"

"They are brothers, you know, and

blood is thicker than water. But that is neither here nor there. We'll know all this morning."

Appler stayed to breakfast, to the wrath of Sarah, who wished the food would choke him.

Ethel soon saw that something was amiss, and Marlow was forced to tell her that he hoped he was on the track of his mother.

"Oh! if I could only hear something of my dear father!" cried the girl.

"I think we will hear of him soon, miss," said Appler, as he took a quaff of tea.

"Oh! do you? Oh! I am so glad!" she trembled with excitement and looked eagerly at her lover, but his face was clouded.

Now would come the tug of war! How could he tell her? How could he conceal it from her? How could he bid her decide betwixt him and her father?

"Alex, take some tea."

He raised his eyes. How lovely she looked! so pure, so young, so innocent! How could he give her up?—Oh! no, no! he could not! he could not!

His troubled looks attracted her. "Take some tea," said she, gently.

He started. "No—no—thanks—no tea."

The breakfast came to an end.

"Perhaps they will make an exception in our favour," said Appler, "as the man is bad off;" and Marlow gladly agreed to go.

"Good morning, miss," said Appler, bowing, and left the room.

Full of contending emotions, Marlow nodded. "Good-bye, Ethel. I'll be back after awhile and report," he said coolly, and followed Appler out to the hall.

Like a pendulum his feelings swung to and fro, and he called himself a wretch to leave her so coldly.

"Wait a minute," said he to Appler, and hurried back.

Ethel stood by the window with her back to the door, her face covered with her hands, the tears dropping through her fingers. Marlow strode across the room and clasped her in his arms.

"My darling! did I hurt you by my coldness! I am so distressed—so torn about!—My precious! I love you better than all the world!—than any living thing—than life itself! There, there, sweetheart, don't cry; every drop burns into my heart! Let me kiss them off."

"I'm very childish, very foolish," murmured the girl, her breath almost taken away by her lover's stormy affection.

"No, you are not—you are an angel—a precious love—My very heart-strings!" he strained her closer. "I love you! I love you! and nothing shall ever part us—Nothing!"

One more close embrace, one more passionate kiss, he placed the astonished girl in a chair and abruptly left the room, and she heard the street door slam after him.

What on earth was the matter? A feeling of vague alarm took possession of her.

Marlow hurried away, and through

Appler's influence got permission to enter the hospital at once. The doctor said that the new patient was in a very precarious state.

He had just slept off the Chinaman's drug and taken a little stimulant when the two entered. At sight of Marlow he shivered all over.

"Quiet yourself now," said the doctor, "quiet yourself, or he will have to leave."

"I want to ask your pardon!" wailed the wretch. "I want to ask your pardon."

"Never mind my pardon," said Marlow, "but tell me what you wished to confess when you sent for me before."

"To tell you that I helped carry off your mother."

"Who did it?" cried Marlow passionately. "Who did it?"

"Mr. ——" Here Patrick uttered a scream and fell back in a spasm.

"How provoking!" cried Appler. "The very name throws him into a fit!"

They waited awhile. The nurse, directed by the physician, administered restoratives and the tremour passed, the patient's teeth unlocked.

"I warn you not to waste your time," said the doctor in an aside. "Another spasm will come on directly; the end is near; I think one of them will take him off."

"Where is Mrs. Marlow?" said the detective, keeping his wits. "Tell us that quickly! now quickly!"

The poor wretch, all in a quiver, ground his teeth and through them hissed: "At the Hopedale asylum!"

"The asylum!" cried Marlow, horror stricken.

Before Patrick could answer, another spasm seized him.

"You'll get no more information out of him at present," said the doctor, "so let him be now."

"Hopedale Asylum!" said Appler. "Where is it?"

"In the suburbs of Alburn. A large private asylum. Dr. Felder has quite a fame, and has, I suppose, from five hundred to six hundred patients. It is a splendidly managed place."

"Not if they take in sane persons," said Marlow hotly.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders; he did not believe the dying man's statement.

Without another look at the struggling wretch, Marlow and Appler hurried off to find when the train left for Alburn. On examining a time table, Marlow saw that he could leave at 1 p.m. He could get his mother and return next day.

"You don't need me," said Appler.

"Not a bit, I can manage alone."

"Well," said Appler, "one hint. Ask for Mrs. Marlow; say you are her son, if you choose; but don't say you are going to take her away till you see her, or you will have trouble. Let them think you have come to make her a call."

"Why?"

"It will be safest. When Dorset put her in, you don't know what he said. See your mother first, then you will know best what to say and how to act. And if there is any trouble you can telegraph for me."

Marlow agreed to all this, and then hurried home to notify Sarah. As he rode along he wondered how much he should tell Sarah and what he should say to Ethel. When her father's vile plans were exposed, would he allow him to marry his daughter? Would he not refuse, and so retaliate on him that way? Would Ethel remain true to him? He could not possibly keep up friendly relations with Dorset, and would Ethel consent to give up her father? And if Dorset had shut up his mother in the asylum, where was he? How much did Mr. Perkins know? He would go and see him if he had time. Though had he not better wait, for he might notify Dorset, and his mother be removed. But he doubted if his brother knew much about it; the Chinaman going there for money was no proof. He might have consented to act as Dorset's agent and paid the man not knowing for what. Perhaps he had told him some artful tale about Patrick. Dorset was vile enough for anything.

How could he be the father of that angel? Oh! it was disgusting! he couldn't believe it! he couldn't believe it! She must be some changeling left in his charge—maybe he stole her, he was so vicious—he hoped he did. He hated the thought that Dorset's blood flowed in her veins. She did not look like him—he was such a rough, coarse-looking man—and she—how delicate! how refined!

Sarah looked astonished to see him back so soon. Ethel was in the parlor practising a new song he had given

her. Marlow beckoned Sarah into the dining-room and closed the folding doors.

"Sarah," said he, "I have something to tell you. Now keep your wits about you."

"Very well," said Sarah, grasping the back of a chair and bracing herself, as if she expected a blow on the head.

"I have just come from the hospital, where Patrick is dying."

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Sarah.

"He has confessed that he helped to kidnap her."

"Good Lord have mercy!" Sarah's hands tightened on the chair.

"And that she is now shut up in a lunatic asylum."

"What! Good Lord have mercy on me!" she gasped, staggering back as if he had dealt her a heavy blow.

"Calm yourself, Sarah. I leave at once for Alburn, and will probably return to-morrow with mother."

"Thank God!" said Sarah, fervently.

"Amen!" said Marlow.

"But tell me," said Sarah, "who was Patrick helping to put her in the asylum?"

"That I cannot say; he fell into a fit before he could call any name. All that he said was that he helped to put her into the asylum at Alburn."

"Wretch of the earth!" cried Sarah, fiercely. "I wish I had him here in these two hands—how I'd choke him!"

"Retribution has overtaken him very swiftly," said Marlow, gravely. "His greatest enemy could not wish him a worse fate than has befallen

him. But to return to our own affairs. Prepare mother's room, and have ready everything for her."

"Miss Ethel?" said Sarah.

"Give her my room."

"And you?"

"Put me anywhere—in the dining-room—in the attic—I don't care. And, Sarah, take good care of the child while I am gone. Don't let anything happen to her?"

"Of course not," said Sarah, with mild contempt. "What is there to happen to her?"

Marlow made no reply. He pulled open the folding doors and went into the parlor.

"Ethel, my pet," he said, as the girl rose to meet him, "you will be glad to know I've heard of my mother."

"Oh! I am indeed glad. Where is she?"

"At the asylum at Alburn."

"The asylum!"

"The lunatic asylum."

"Oh, oh, how dreadful! Alex., I am very sorry for you."

"Sorry for me?"

"That such an awful fate should have befallen her."

"Awful fate indeed! Child, she was kidnapped and put there. She is not insane."

"Oh!" cried the girl, full of horror. "What black-hearted wretch could do so vile a deed?"

Marlow's brow contracted as he gazed on her. How pure and innocent she was. Oh, great heaven, could it be possible that she was that man's child? And when his vile plots were exposed what would the end be?

"Ethel," said he abruptly, "I am leaving you with a heavy heart."

"Oh, how can you say that?" said the girl. "Why, if I could only see my dear father, or even know that he was safe somewhere, I would feel as gay as a bird."

Marlow involuntarily recoiled.

Ethel gazed at him in surprise and her eyes filled.

Marlow caught her in his arms. "Ethel," cried he hoarsely, "Ethel, my darling, I love you! I love you to distraction. My heart is filled with gloomy forebodings of evil. Sweetheart, I love you better than life! Promise me that whatever happens you will be true to me. Promise me, promise me!"

Ethel looked at him with an air of innocent surprise in her great dark eyes. "True to you?" she repeated in wonder.

"I feel that some great misfortune is impending over us. Whatever may betide, promise me that you will be true to me, that you will let no one come between us, that you will love me only, love me ever. Promise me."

"I promise," said the girl, clinging to him, frightened by his manner. "Oh, Alex., what is the matter?"

"My heart is torn by misgivings," said Marlow as he kissed her passionately. "But I love you to distraction, and I will never give you up. Never! Never! Remember that, Ethel, whatever may happen on that I am resolved."

Then he tore himself away and placed her in Sarah's arms,

"I commit her to your care till my return. Let nothing happen to her."

"You may bet on that," said Sarah, stoutly.

Encircled in Sarah's arm, Marlow stooped and pressed one kiss on the girl's forehead and hurried from the house.

For many a long day did both Ethel and Sarah recall that last farewell.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was after four o'clock when Marlow reached Alburn and drove out to the asylum. Alburn was a large, handsome country town, and the asylum was situated in the suburbs.

As Marlow drove out, he was a prey to conflicting emotions. Joy at the thought of seeing his mother; anger when he thought of hearing from her of all she had endured; dread of her not approving of his engagement to Ethel Dorset, and horror of meeting Dorset himself.

At last he reached the asylum, an extremely large and handsome building, or rather buildings, for it consisted of three—a large central hall for the officers and convalescents, and two others a little smaller, for the worst cases of either sex. These two were about fifty feet distant from the central building, though at a little distance the three looked like one vast pile. This splendid mansion of

woe was set in a park of twenty or thirty acres, beautifully kept and encircled by high walls to prevent escape.

"How many poor wretches are imprisoned here?" Marlow thought, and shuddered as he drove up the broad avenue. Entering a beautiful Corinthian porch, he rang the bell and asked for Dr. Felder.

He was ushered into a handsome office, and soon a pleasant gentleman of a bland and smiling demeanour entered; he seemed a trifle near-sighted and wore gold eye-glasses.

"Mr. Martin?" said the doctor, glancing at the card in his hand.

"Marlow," said the young man, and, remembering Appler's advice, put a strong constraint on himself. "My mother is confined here, and I have come to see her."

"Marlow, Marlow," said Doctor Felder. "The name is not familiar."

"Mrs. Anne Marlow."

Doctor Felder shook his head. "But I will soon see."

He unlocked an office desk, and drew out a set of ledgers.

"Entered in what month?" said he.

"February."

"J, K, L, M, Mabray, Malley, Martin, Margrave, Marsley, Marsden, Montague,—No," said he, "there is no Marlow here."

"Look in March," said Marlow, all in a quiver.

"Why, don't you know what month she entered?"

"Not exactly," said the young man striving for composure

"That's strange—March—Let me see; Marshall, Marion, Martin, again—No, there is no Marlow."

"April, then," said Marlow.

"Come, young man," said the doctor, putting down the ledger on the desk and looking at him over his glasses. "What do you mean? Don't you know when your mother was sent to the asylum?"

"No," said Marlow, doggedly, "I don't!"

The doctor eyed him suspiciously. Could he be crazy, and sent here? "What was she put in here for? What was she suffering from? Melancholy?—mild or violent insanity?"

"She was suffering from nothing," said Marlow, losing his control. "She was kidnapped and brought here."

"Come! come!" said the doctor. "This won't do; I can't suffer such language. This is a respectable institution, and not a harbour for kidnappers."

"I had it from good authority," said Marlow. "From a man on his death-bed, that he helped to abduct her, and she was brought here."

"Sir," said the doctor, "this is insufferable—unless—" and he glanced at Marlow's excited face.

"I am not mad," said Marlow, reading his look. "Though God knows I have gone through enough to make me so. Tell me honestly, did not a man named Dorset—Thomas Dorset—fetch a lady here, either in February or March?"

Again the doctor good-naturedly took out his ledger and examined. "No such name."

Marlow's heart stopped. "Perkins, then," said he, "William Perkins?"

"This is a little fatiguing," said the doctor, certain he was out of his mind. "No, no Perkins either."

"That is strange! What could Patrick have meant?"

"He was out of his mind," said the doctor. "It would surprise you to know how many people are crazy."

"The only wonder to me is that more don't go mad," said the young man. "Then, Doctor, let me go through the asylum and satisfy myself. If I saw my mother I would know her."

"That is impossible," said the doctor, convinced that he was a lunatic. "I can't allow it."

"But I will," said Marlow, losing his temper. "Do you suppose I came all this distance for nothing, and that after employing detectives to trace her whereabouts, and they have tracked her here, I am going to be balked by your opposition? I insist on going over the asylum."

"Now he is getting violent," thought the doctor. "I was right; he is crazy." Then he said aloud, "It is against all rules."

"Rules!" cried Marlow, angrily. "Do I care for rules? How dare you talk to me of rules? You who have helped to kidnap my mother! I will see her! I'll have the police in, but I search the place!"

"We'll see about that," said the doctor, and he rang the bell. A man entered. "Send Thomas and Johnson here," said he.

Soon two stout men appeared; they

were, in fact, two of the keepers accustomed to deal with the more violent patients, and were very powerful.

"Now," said the doctor, "leave here at once, or these men will remove you."

"I will not," said Marlow; "I will see my mother."

"I have explained to you that she is not here. Leave at once."

And Marlow, seeing that he was in sober earnest, left, rather than be dragged out by the keepers. But as he left, he turned and said, "You shall hear from me again."

"I don't doubt it," said the doctor. "And what is more, you will need a straight jacket," he added, aside.

Cruelly disappointed, full of impotent rage and fury, Marlow drove away. What should he do? By the time he had reached town he had cooled down and began to think coherently. He saw that his stay would be longer in Alburn than he calculated on, so he drove to the Saville House and took a room, and consulted with the clerk as to who was a good lawyer.

The clerk recommended Mr. Curry on Poplar Avenue, and to Mr. Curry's office Marlow wended his way.

Mr. Curry was a shrewd, middle-aged man, with a keen eye and a hatchet face that seemed to have been sharpened on cutting knotty points.

Marlow introduced himself, and tried to lay his case before him. He was a trifle incoherent, but by a series of dexterous questions, Mr. Curry got the leading points out of him.

The disappearance of his mother; the unsuccessful search for her by detectives; the partial confession of the penitent coachman; his disappearance, reappearance, further confession, and the doctor's statement and treatment.

Guided by his professional bias, Mr. Curry believed Marlow for the same reason that the doctor disbelieved; such cases had come under his experience; while Marlow's case was uncommon, it was probable. But he utterly failed to make Marlow believe that the physician was not in league with the kidnappers.

"Dr. Felder is an honest man. It is far more likely that he thought you crazy and treated you accordingly."

"He had no right to think such a thing," said Marlow indignantly. "I believe he is as guilty as Dorset, and I have come to you to know if the strong arm of the law can't be invoked to protect me and my mother. Can't I compel Dr. Felder to allow me to search his asylum for her?"

"Yes," said the lawyer, "we can take out a search-warrant, after you have made a sworn statement of your case. But as you are a stranger here, you had better telegraph back to your friend, the detective, and get him to send you a sworn statement of the sick man, properly attested both by himself and the physician in charge. Armed with these I think we will have no trouble in searching the asylum from top to bottom."

Thus spoke the lawyer, and he secretly thought that if there was any

doubt about Marlow's story (this would settle it.

Marlow at once followed the lawyer's advice, and then tried to possess his soul in patience as he waited till the next day, when he calculated that Appler would have time to send the necessary papers by the mid-day mail; at any rate, he would certainly receive them by the afternoon or night, at farthest.

After sending his dispatch, he returned to the hotel and passed a wretched night, tormented by hideous dreams that all but unnerved him, for he saw his mother in all sorts of frightful situations.

The next day he sought to while away the weary hours by walking out to the asylum, but could see nothing but the high walls and barred gates that kept all safe within bounds.

He walked round and round the high brick walls that, with the help of a large corps of nurses, kept the patients prisoners. At last he tramped back to the hotel and asked at the office if the mail had come in.

"No mail for you, sir," said the clerk, "but here is a telegram been waiting some time."

Marlow tore it open and read:

"Come back at once. Foul play.

"MARK APPLER."

The counter, the office, everything swam before Marlow's eyes, and then turned black. He clutched at the desk to steady himself.

"Take care, sir," said the clerk, "don't faint. Here, take something."

"A bad attack of vertigo," muttered Marlow, dropping into a chair.

He drank off the glass of "something" the clerk offered, not knowing what it was, and then staggered off to his room to try and collect his senses.

What could Appler mean? What could have happened? Foul play to whom? Ethel?—Oh, great Heaven! he was going mad.

An hour later he was on the lightning express, hurrying home.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MARLOW gone, Ethel and Sarah whiled away the day as usual. When evening came, Ethel proposed that Sarah should fetch her knitting to the parlour, and that she would sing or read a story to her to pass the time. Sarah all mildness, acceded.

"I love to hear you sing," she said, "you make me think of a wildwood bird."

"Sarah," said the girl, "my heart feels sad; I seem so alone. Papa gone, Alex gone, I feel all alone in the world."

"That's the blues," said Sarah, cheerfully, "and 'tis natural to you in your situation; but it will come all right when Master Alex comes back with the madam. Things will brighten then."

"Yes, but I do so want to see my father. Sarah, you don't know how

my heart aches when I think of him!" and tears streamed down her face.

Sarah was touched. "Cheer up, my pretty," said she, and seating herself, she took Ethel upon her lap. "Such a frail thing," said she, stroking the girl's dark hair; "such a frail thing to be so buffeted about; but cheer up, my pretty, when Master Alex comes back with his mother he'll turn to and hunt your pa. Master Alex is a master hand at that business. See how he's hunted and hunted, and now he's found his mother."

"Sarah," said the girl, "do you think she'll like me?"

"I think so," said Sarah. "She's very picking and choosing, is the madam, but she can't fail to like you, and my staying here too. I'll tell her I was always on hand, and she knows I can be trusted, and if I am a poor woman I am a respectable one, and that'll settle it."

"Was there any harm in my staying here?" the girl asked, wistfully. "I had nowhere else to go."

"Not a bit," said Sarah. "A sweet innocent like you! and Master Alex as good as gold, and me that's respectable—No, no; the world may talk, but there's nothing to talk about here; I saw to that."

Ethel was mystified by Sarah's remarks. She was densely ignorant on these matters, and had only her instinct to guide her. Fortunately in her case, her youth and innocence had acted like an armour to shield her. But as Sarah assured her, she had

taken charge of the proprieties, she wisely concluded to let the matter rest, and think of something else.

She loved to be petted, and appreciated the honour that Sarah did her in unbending so far as to hold her. Putting her arms about the spinster's neck she laid her head on Sarah's austere bosom and said, "You are so good and sweet! I do love you!"

Sarah's heart swelled. When had she ever had such language used to her before?

"My pretty one! my sweet one!" she murmured, kissing Ethel's slender hand by way of a caress.

Just here a loud ring was heard at the area door.

"Why?" cried Sarah, "who can that be? The milkman has come and gone too long too talk about." She put Ethel off her lap and rose up hastily. "I'll go and see."

"Let me go with you," said Ethel. "Arn't you afraid?"

"Afraid?" Sarah laughed. "Afraid of what, child? And what help could you be to anybody in danger? No, no, you stay here; I'll be back in a minute."

Sarah lit a candle that she kept in a Japan candlestick ready for emergencies and went down the basement stairs. The candle gave a feeble glimmer, for Sarah had, with that frugality on which she prided herself, turned off the gas, and the basement was all darkness.

"Why, it is after ten o'clock," said Sarah to herself, glancing at the kitchen clock. "What can any one

want this time of night? Who is there?" she asked.

"If you please, I want to see you a minute."

"And who are you?" asked Sarah, a trifle anxious on Ethel's account.

"Mr. Appler sent me on a message," answered the voice, and Sarah boldly opened the door.

Ethel, waiting at the head of the basement stairs, heard a loud scream from Sarah. Wild with terror she ran for the basement; as she reached the bottom of the stairs the sight that met her eyes appalled her and turned her into stone.

As Sarah opened the door a man entered, and stepped by her into the hall. He had his hat crowded down over his eyes; a dark silk handkerchief tied over the lower part of his face; a loose long overcoat concealed his figure. He stepped into the hall and then quickly around behind Sarah as she stood with the half opened door in her hand, looking at another man close upon the first one's heels, and similarly attired.

Before the astonished Sarah could take in the situation, the first comer had pinioned her elbows, and did it with such a jerk that the door flew out of her hand, and the two men kicking it to, it closed with a slam.

Sarah uttered a frightened scream that drowned its slamming. Before she could utter another the second man jerked out of his pocket two handkerchiefs, crammed one into her mouth, and with the other tied it there, thus securely muffling her.

Sarah struggled desperately, but

the men were strong and the one in the rear held her with an iron grip. In the scuffle the hat of the man in front was knocked off, and his handkerchief mask dropped. Sarah got a glimpse of his face, but it was that of a stranger. Before she could take in any more the man jerked a pillow-case from his other pocket, drew it over Sarah's head, and secured it by tying another handkerchief about her neck. He then assisted the other man in tying her hands behind her. Having pinioned and muffled her they proceeded to lay her down in a corner.

All of this was done with a rapidity and dexterity that bespoke practiced hands, as indeed they were; one of the men being a professional garroter. By the time Ethel reached the bottom of the steps they were putting the finishing touches to their work, and the first man pounced on her before the horrified girl could clearly take in the fact or realize what they had done to Sarah. And the next moment the garroter had muffled her with handkerchiefs and pillow-case, while the first man held her. He then tied her hands behind her back with his silk handkerchief, being careful not to bruise her delicate limbs.

The garroter then went out to a carriage drawn up, waiting at the sidewalk, took thence a large shawl in which the girl was completely enveloped. After which the two men lifted her by main force in their arms, carried her out of the house, carefully shutting the door behind them and put her in the carriage. One

got in with her, the other mounted the box and drove rapidly off.

If Sarah was blind and dumb, she was not deaf. She heard the struggle with Ethel, her moans of fright, the door open and shut, and the carriage drive away, and she realized that Ethel had been kidnapped.

Wild with fright, she struggled desperately but vainly to free herself. Then a terrible feeling of suffocation came on, for the men had cruelly laid her on her face, and she soon discovered that unless she could move she would be smothered. Terror gave her strength. After many desperate efforts, by pushing with her feet against the wall, she managed to turn over, first on her side, then on her back.

True she now suffered cruelly with her hands which were crushed by the weight of her body, but better pain than suffocation.

All night long she lay there, suffering torture; her hands and arms throbbed and swelled and ached, and at last became numbed and dead. In vain did she beat with her heels upon the floor. In vain did she utter muffled cries; no one seemed to hear her.

As the hours rolled by she began to wonder when any one would find her; the house was secured locked up; no one could hear her, no one could get to her, till Marlow came home. And what a sight for him to behold! And to tell him that Ethel was gone! Oh, how could she do it?—Oh, how could she face him!—and say, “She is gone!”—and gone

where? Who had taken her? What would happen to her? What might be happening to her then? She strained at her bonds, but strained in vain; the handkerchiefs were new and strong.

She tortured herself with these thoughts for hours, and then another awful idea occurred to her—suppose Marlow should be detained in Alburn for several days—or a week—what would she do?—Starve to death!—Die by inches of paralysis!—Oh! It was awful! awful!

The night slowly passed, day broke. The roar and rattle of the streets recommenced, and Sarah began to see that her chances of being heard were less and less. She thought of rolling towards the door and pounding it with her heels, but she had no idea where it was. She rolled here and there, though it was torture, pounding the wall with her feet. At last she found the door, for it gave back a different sound, and she beat upon it with her heels, but no one paid any attention to her.

Finally the milk wagon stopped, the milkman came to get his can and put down another. Sarah gave a tremendous bang upon the door with her feet, and the milkman jumped.

“Gracious!” said he, “what is that?”

Bang! Bang! Bang! went the feet till the door rattled.

“This is very strange,” said the milkman; “sounds like Miss Sarah has a goat shut up in here.”

Then there came a curious, frightful, muffled sound. The cry of a

human voice in distress, and yet it had the sound of a dumb animal's too.

"She must have a fit," thought the frightened man, and he ventured to try the latch. The door yielded, and he peeped in. By the dim light of the candle, which was guttering in its socket, the milkman saw a queer-looking object scuffling on the floor, uttering terrible sounds.

"Great goodness!" said he. "What can it be?"

Trembling all over, he looked closely. Yes, it was a woman, and it looked like Sarah. And all the while she kept uttering muffled cries of entreaty. The frightened fellow be-thought himself to light the gas—a stream of light fell full on the strange figure.

Yes, it was Sarah, with—good gracious!—her head in a bag! She continued her dumb entreaties and the man proceeded to pull her into a sitting posture and untie the handkerchief that fastened the pillow-case.

"Goodness!" he muttered, "how tight it's knotted!"

The handkerchief loosened, the pillow-case was carefully pulled off, and there sat Sarah securely gagged.

"Lord-a-mussy!" he ejaculated. "What devil's work is this?"

Tears of pain and emotion began to stream down Sarah's face, and the man

made haste to free her mouth that she might speak. But from long gagging the moisture had dried, and her tongue was like a bone.

"The oudacious cuss!" muttered the man, as he closed her mouth, for her jaws were well-nigh paralyzed; "the oudacious cuss! He ought to end his days in Sing Sing! Well, I do declare! if her hands ain't tied behind her! and all but blue! Yes, ma'am, I'll get it done in a minute," he said, in answer to her moans of entreaty, and he commenced to unfasten the complicated knots.

At last she was free, and the milkman hurried into the kitchen, returned with a pitcher of water, wet one of the handkerchiefs and dampened her tongue, then gave her a little to drink.

After a little Sarah managed to speak, and tell what the milkman was bursting to know, and while he rubbed her hands and arms to restore the circulation, Sarah, between hysterical sobs, told her tale, to which the milkman listened in horror.

At last he was forced to tear himself away, promising to send Sarah the first policeman he met, and also to stop at the house of a friend of hers a few squares off, and send the woman to her. This he the more readily promised as she was one of his customers, and he being behind on his route she was now up.

CHAPTER XIX.

AWAY went the milkman, and soon came the policeman, and Sarah, as she sat on the bottom step of the basement stairs, with her useless hands in her lap, recounted to him her adventure.

"This is work for a detective," said he, "and I will send one up."

"Send Mr. Appler then," said Sarah, pain and trouble subduing her pride and aversion. "Mr. Marlow employs him."

The policeman left just as the friend came bursting into the door.

"Gracious goodness me!" cried she, and listened open-mouthed and eyed as Sarah slowly retold the tale.

"Look at your poor hands and arms! I'm afraid you'll be permanently crippled in them! And how would you then make your living? or feed yourself, for that matter?"

She bustled about and got a box of ointment, with which she rubbed the numbed and bruised hands and arms. Then she made Sarah some strong coffee, and while it was drawing ran to the dining-room and got her a glass of wine.

By the time Appler arrived, Sarah was greatly revived and could tell her story with some composure. The detective heard her tale with horror, and he viewed Sarah with a pity he did not dream he could feel for her.

"Why, this is horrible!" said he. "Who do you think could have done it?"

"I can't think," said Sarah. "I

never saw the face of but one man, and him I did not know."

"If you are able, will you go over the house with me to see what was stolen?"

"They stole nothing, I tell you," said Sarah. "They snatched up that child and made off. They never came farther than the basement stairs, where I suppose she ran down when I screamed, for she cried out, 'Oh, Sarah! Oh, mercy!' so pitiful," sobbed Sarah — "Oh, the wretch!"

Appler carefully examined the handkerchiefs with which she had been bound. They were brand new, with no name.

"A cheap lot they bought for the occasion," muttered the detective.

Then he picked up the pillow-case; the name had been nearly washed out; it was so pale and faded as to be hardly perceptible. He took it out in the strong morning light. That there had been a name was all that he could see. He rolled the case up and stuffed it in his coat pocket to take off with him.

"I'll telegraph Mr. Marlow to return at once, Miss All—ah—spice—ah—Sarah," said he, about to split on the rock of her name.

But Sarah took no heed of that; he might have called her ginger or cloves for aught she cared, so great was her distress now about Ethel. "My pretty! My pretty!" she kept moaning. "Oh, where are you?"

"Mr. Appler," cried Sarah, at last taking in what he said, "How can I face Master Alex, after what has

happened? 'Take good care of her, Sarah; remember, I look for her at your hands,' was his last words; and what shall I say when I meet him?"

"Show him your hands," said Appler. "I don't think he can say a word when he sees them."

Having consoled Sarah to the best of his ability he scurried off with the pillow-case as fast as he could go. When he reached police headquarters he telegraphed Marlow to return.

"His mother can wait," he thought, "the same she waited all these months. I need Marlow to help me in this case. He can probably give me a clue to go on, whether it be the girl's father or that rascal Jeffreys that has abducted her."

While he thought thus, he unlocked a cupboard in one corner of the room, took thence a bottle of colourless liquid, spread the pillow-case on the table and poured a few drops on the effaced name.

As if by magic it darkened and stood plain before his eyes—"J. E. Brown!"

"Brown!" ejaculated Appler, "I thought it would have been Jeffreys. All the same I bet he has a finger in the pie."

Then he meditatively rubbed the side of his nose.

"J. E. Brown! J. E. Brown! Who the dickens is J. E. Brown?"

He seized upon the city directory and began going through all the Brown family. There were five hundred Browns and twenty J. E. Browns.

"Phew!" said he. "What a

job!" and proceeded to make a list of their different addresses. Then he went to the private office of the chief and laid the case before him and begged for the assistance of a squad of men.

"Certainly," said the chief, "take whomever you please."

In half an hour Appler had ten detectives abroad ferreting out the whereabouts, habits, pursuits, etc., of the twenty J. E. Browns.

His suspicions naturally turned on Jeffreys, and he ordered him to be shadowed. But Jeffreys had gone to his broker's office in the morning and seemed immersed in his business, and there was nothing to charge him with.

"How can I face Marlow if I have nothing to tell him?" thought Appler.

By twelve o'clock the detectives brought in their report of the twenty Browns. Each had a brief written statement of the whereabouts, profession, habits, reputation, of the person he had been sent to investigate. They were butchers, bakers, tailors, merchants, lawyers, doctors. Appler proceeded now to sift and winnow the mass.

The first his eye fell on was "Jack E. Brown, butcher; hard-working man, but given to drink. Drunk at this time. Residence, 50, Perslain Street—very poor."

Appler glanced at the pillow-case; it was of linen and nicely laundried. "No," said the detective, "Jack never owned a pillow-case like that." He took up the next paper,

"James E. Brown, merchant, middle-aged man of family; high moral character. Residence, 50, Second Avenue."

"Pass James E. Brown," muttered Appler. "You may sleep on a linen-pillow-case, but 'tis hardly likely that you were engaged in any such exploit."

"John E. Brown, lawyer, sixty years old. Character flinty but honest."

"No, no; catch a lawyer at such a business!"

"Jerome E. Brown, young doctor, just commenced to practice. Dandified and ambitious to excel as oculist."

"He also sleeps on linen pillow-cases, but 'tis hardly probable he'd cut up such a caper."

"Johannes E. Brown, baker; drives for—"

"Phoo! Never saw a linen case—be off with you!"

He kept reading and commenting, but he felt puzzled. There were none of specially unsavory reputation; none who would be apt to break into houses or garrote helpless women. As he was thus musing his eye fell on this address:

"Julian E. Brown; fast man about town, fond of horse-flesh."

"Julius E. Brown, gambler."

"Yes; it must have been one of these. But how came either to know about the girl? Perhaps they are in cahoot with Jeffreys; at any rate we shall soon know."

Away went Appler on this scent and proceeded to have the two men

shadowed. He had at last got things in working order, and had just returned to his office feeling a little triumphant at his skill, when the door burst open and Marlow entered.

"Appler! What in heaven's name is the matter?"

"Mr. Marlow," began the detective, "I am very sorry for you."

Marlow looked at him without a word.

"Mr. Marlow, try and bear it like a man."

"Speak!" said Marlow, hoarsely.

"Don't torture me!"

"Last night—Miss Dorset disappeared——"

"Disappeared?"

"Was abducted."

"Abducted! How?"

Masked men burst into your house, tied up the servant and bore the girl off."

Marlow stood silent, motionless, as if turned to stone, while Appler proceeded to give a detailed account of the affair.

"I was notified at once of the affair and telegraphed for you."

"Ethel!" said Marlow, in a hoarse voice. "Have you heard anything of her?"

"Not yet; we have had hardly time. But I think I am on the right track. See here," and he took out the pillow-case and told all about it. "We are now shadowing these two Browns, and I think soon to be at the root of the matter."

"Julius and Julian Brown," repeated Marlow,

"Yes."

"What have they to do with it?"

"You couldn't have been listening," and Appler went over his new theory.

"Brown be d——!" cried Marlow, furiously, "You idiot. Don't you know that Jeffreys is at the bottom of all this? the black-hearted wretch! —the—the——" language failed him.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Marlow," said Appler, keeping his temper. "I have had Jeffreys shadowed all day, and so far nothing has occurred to warrant a charge of his complicity, though I don't doubt he has something to do with it, but we have no proof as yet."

"I'd arrest him anyhow."

"To have him clear himself and put him on his guard? I can't do that."

"Could not Sarah identify him?"

"She did see the face of one, but he was a stranger. Go home now and see her and meet me here at dusk."

Still dazed by the shock, Marlow went off, leaving Appler to the study of the Browns—which of them could have had any complicity with Jeffreys—perhaps Julius—perhaps Julian—he still hung to that theory.

Marlow hurried home, anxious to hear all that Sarah could tell. His pass key turned in the door; he entered. How deserted, how death-like everything seemed! No sound broke the stillness; no song, no sweet girlish face with smiles of welcome to meet him! He groaned in his agony. Unable to find anyone he started for the basement. Sarah heard his step on the stairs and came out of the kitchen.

"Oh! Master Alex! Master Alex! My pretty! My pretty," she wailed.

Marlow stood before her, mute. Again and again he tried to speak, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

Overcome at the sight of him, Sarah dropped into a chair; her head sank on her breast, her bruised and swollen hands stretched out as if mutely testifying to her fidelity to her trust, while again she wailed out:

"My pretty! My pretty!"

"Tell me everything, Sarah," said Marlow, hoarsely.

With difficulty stopping her sobs, Sarah began. When she finished Marlow felt more than ever convinced that Jeffreys was the prime mover in the affair. Wild with rage and despair he returned to Appler.

CHAPTER XX.

FULL of his J. & J. Brown theory, Appler followed up the two men for several days. Jeffreys, he argued, had probable hidden away the girl, perhaps, at the residence of one of these men. Certainly they knew about her, for they had a hand in her abduction, as the pillow-case proved.

So convinced was he of this, that, urged on by Marlow's impatience, he had Julius Brown arrested, only to have the gamester prove an *alibi*. He did Julian Brown the same kind office with the same result.

All this time Jeffreys gave no cause for suspicion. He went regularly to his office in the morning, to drive in the afternoon, to his club to dinner, to his home at night at eleven o'clock, after spending the evening at some place of amusement or in visiting.

He was paying assiduous court to an heiress, and was seen constantly with her. The young lady's father had recently died, and as she was debarred all amusement, her mother had remained in town during the summer. The only recreation she allowed herself was riding, driving, and receiving the visits of her friends, and Jeffreys was seen constantly with her and seemed to be the favoured suitor.

Goaded on by Marlow, Appler, against his better judgment, had Jeffreys arrested, but nothing could be proved against him, and Jeffreys, full of indignation, declared it was a conspiracy to injure him.

He acknowledged that he had indeed tried first to persuade, then to compel Miss Dorset to leave Marlow's house, but failing to induce her, had abandoned all thought of her and turned his attention elsewhere. He kindly suggested that perhaps her father had taken that method to get her, without revealing his whereabouts; or more likely still, Marlow himself did it, to rid himself of the girl when he wearied of her.

On hearing of this speech, Marlow could with difficulty be prevented from laying violent hands on his rival. Only Appler's assurance that any

violence on his part would retard the search, kept him from choking the life out of him.

They were now as much at sea as ever, and in this way, four days were lost. Marlow was furious at their blunders. The long and tedious strain on his nerves began to tell; his temper gave way. Appler bore his savage outbursts with great good nature. He was really interested in the case; his pride was up, his vanity piqued; disappointment did not make him lose heart; though baffled oft he returned again and again to his pillow-case theory.

"Confound that pillow-case! don't mention it!" cried Marlow savagely. "But for that infernal case we would be on the true scent. But you fooled away the time with your Browns till Jeffreys got posted."

"This case is all we have to go by," said Appler, quietly, unruffled by Marlow's outburst. "Lord! Lord!" thought the detective, "what a dreadful thing to happen to a man to be in love. It is worse than losing his mother for it makes him lose his mind."

"This case is a very good clue," said Appler aloud. "I wouldn't want a better, if you only had the patience to wait. By the help of this case——"

At this, Marlow, unable to endure the subject any longer, burst away in a rage and left the office. Appler shook his head and took up the pillow-case and once more attentively examined the mark.

"This is a woman's hand-writing,"

he said, "probably the wife of the man—but no, neither of those men are married." Again he took up the list of the J. E. Browns and went over it.

"Mrs. Jane Eliza Brown; keeps a boarding-house 35 L street."

"Now, maybe this is it. Of course not the woman herself, but one of her boarders; and that is maybe, why he was so free with the pillow-case; he was careful enough about the handkerchiefs, they were new and unmarked. The case did not belong to him; he thought that if he stole the name it would throw suspicion off his track. It's worth looking into."

He folded the pillow-case into a neat brown paper parcel and took his way to 35 L street.

It was one of many boarding-houses, and when Appler rang at the door and asked for Mrs. Brown he was shown into the parlour where Mrs. Brown soon made her appearance. The parlour was nicely furnished, which was more than could be said of Mrs. Brown. She was shabbily dressed, of an uncertain age, and had an uneasy anxious expression, as if every nerve was strained in the continual effort to make buckle and tongue meet.

As Mrs. Brown looked at Appler the hope sprang up in her breast that he had come to assist her in the effort, for she had several rooms vacant, and Appler's first remark was calculated to feed this hope.

"You take in boarders, I think, Mrs. Brown."

"Yes."

"Have you many now?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Brown, fibbing readily.

"I am a family man," said Appler, lying boldly in his turn, "and am looking for nice, private board."

"This, I am sure would suit."

"Have you any men boarders, Mrs. Brown? I have a daughter. I would like to know with whom she would be thrown."

"Has she not a mother?" asked Mrs. Brown, a little nettled.

"No, I am a widower," said Appler, again launching into fiction, "so I am forced to be very careful."

"I am a mother," said Mrs. Brown; "I too have a daughter."

"Then you know what a responsibility it is, madam."

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Brown, who would have agreed to anything. "But my young men are very nice."

"Perhaps I know some of them."

"Mr. Hamby, Mr. Dodd, Mr. Long, Mr. Kelly, and Mr. Jeffreys."

"Jeffreys," said the detective, "I think I know him. What sort of looking man is he?"

"Young man, quite handsome, and very wealthy; a great friend of my daughter's," said the unsuspecting widow.

"Is he here now?"

"He comes and goes. Travels, I think."

"Is he here at present?"

"No, he is absent."

"I know he is in town," thought the detective, "for I saw him. I bet he is after no good here." Then

aloud, "Might I see his room, madam?"

"See his room!"

"Mrs. Brown," said Appler, opening his parcel, "do you know this?"

Mrs. Brown took hold of the pillow-case in a gingerly manner. She wondered if the new-comer was crazy.

"It is a pillow-case," said she, "and it is mine," she continued. "How came you by it?"

"Is that your writing?"

"Certainly. Where did you find it?"

"At a house which had been broken open and robbed, and where the thief left it."

"Who are you?" cried Mrs. Brown, shrinking back.

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Brown, I am a detective."

"And you suspect me?"

"Not you, madam, but your boarders. Keep calm, ma'am. It's an ugly business, but I think you can help me out of it."

Mrs. Brown resumed her seat, all in a quiver.

"Do you furnish all your boarders with linen cases?"

"No, indeed."

"Which ones?"

"Mr. Long and Mr. Jeffreys."

"When was Mr. Jeffreys last here?"

"About a week ago."

"Did he sleep here?"

"No, he went to his room and went out again, saying he was going out of town."

"Suppose we go to his room and see if his bed has cases on."

Mrs. Brown complied, trembling as she walked. The room was nicely put to rights and the bed neatly made up. Appler lifted the shams—the pillow-cases were gone!

Mrs. Brown fell into a chair in hysterics.

"Mrs. Brown! Mrs. Brown! calm yourself, madam."

"A house breaker! and so devoted to my daughter!"

"A snake in the grass, ma'am. You should be glad to have him unmasked," said Appler, mixing his similes. "Mrs. Brown," he continued, "can you keep a secret, ma'am?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Brown, half beside herself.

"Then try for once, ma'am. Don't let Mr. Jeffreys—don't let any one—know that you suspect him, but notify me when he is next here; I wish to try and catch up with him."

"Indeed, I will," said Mrs. Brown. "The idea of his keeping company with my Mary Ann!"

"That is the dodge of some cracksmen," said the detective, calmly. "They are as fine gentlemen as you wish to see."

Appler departed, leaving Mrs. Brown boiling with anger and disappointment.

But if Mrs. Brown believed Appler, her daughter did not. That damsel was infatuated with Jeffreys, and she had been the main reason for his boarding in the house.

Jeffreys came back that very day and ran at once up to his room. Miss

Brown heard him, and hastened to get ahead of her mother. Love made her bold; she tapped at Jeffreys' door. The latter opened it, and seemed surprised at seeing her, and still more so when she stepped in and closed the door.

"Mr. Jeffreys," said she hastily, "the police came here to-day, and told my mother you were a burglar, and to notify them of your return."

"A burglar!" repeated Jeffreys amazed.

"I caught that word, and something about a pillow-case. Mother is very angry and says you are a thief in disguise, and that she will hand you over to the police at once."

"It is false!" cried Jeffreys, not knowing whether to be angry or amused.

"Of course; I know that, but I do not wish you to be disgraced in the house."

"Of course not, my sweetest girl, and I appreciate your kindness. I will call at once at police headquarters and inquire into the meaning of this infamous but ridiculous report," and Jeffreys hurried away.

A man followed him as he left Mrs. Brown's, followed him as he hurried on; saw him stop a hack and get in, ran behind till he found another hack, and still followed. Unconscious of pursuit the hack stopped at last before a dingy looking building in an obscure street; here Jeffreys got out and bidding the hack wait, went in.

The man also got out, noticed the number of his hack, then tried the door and finding it unlocked, went in.

The house seemed deserted; no one was about; no lights, no sound of life; all was still, all was in darkness. But the man boldly mounted the stairs and went noiselessly creeping up one flight of stairs after another, till on the fifth floor he saw a feeble glimmer of light under a door. Here he heard voices, and peeping through the keyhole he saw Jeffreys talking to a young girl, evidently in much distress.

"This is the girl!" thought the man, and scurried down the steps, out at the door, into his hack, and bade the driver go at full speed. At the police station the driver drew up his panting horse, while the man rushed into Appler's private office.

"Come! Come!" he cried, "I've tracked him home with the girl."

Appler who was talking to Marlow, sprang up. Both men hurried after him into the hack and again bade the driver go at full speed. As they drove, the guide told all that he had seen.

"He's taken the alarm and is getting ready to fly," cried Appler.

At last they reached the street and house—but the hack had gone. The door was unlocked, and up the stairs, flight after flight, they hurried, pausing breathlessly at the door.

"Here," said the guide, "I left him."

They burst open the door—all was dark!

"The bird has flown!" cried Appler, and swore fiercely.

Marlow groaned; he could not speak.

Appler struck a match and lit the gas, and they looked about them. Two connecting rooms had evidently been used and there were the remains of a meal on a tray on a table in one of the bedrooms. The windows of this room were all securely fastened, so as to make it a complete jail.

On the floor Appler picked up a pillow-case that matched the one in which Sarah had been muffled. And by the bed Marlow spied a little blue bordered handkerchief marked "Ethel Dorset."

"Oh!" cried Marlow, wild with rage. "If I only had him here I'd choke the life out of him."

"Then it's a lucky thing for you he isn't here," said Appler, still rummaging about the room to see what he could pick up. "For I'd hate to see you get into trouble for a worthless hound like him. Come, let us get after him."

They turned off the gas and hurried away.

After much delay, hack No. 57 was hunted up and the driver questioned. All he could say was, that the gentleman came out of the house with a young lady and got into the hack.

"Did the lady seem unwilling?"

"Not all. She came very quietly and the gentleman said, 'Take us to the Central depot; double fare, hackman, if you catch the 8 o'clock train.'"

"And did you?"

"Just did make it."

"Do you know where they were going? Did they say anything?"

"Not a word; they were very quiet."

And with the hackman all trace of them was lost. Merged in the throng at the Central depot no one had noticed them. Only one fact seemed certain; they had left town.

"He told her something to get her off," said Appler. "Most likely about her father. He's a cunning one! but I'll catch up with him."

But the trail was lost and they failed to find it. For a week Appler continued the unavailing search, but Ethel and her abductor had disappeared as completely as if they had sunk through the earth.

Marlow nearly went mad when he thought of the defenceless girl in the power of this unscrupulous man. Continually he asked himself:

"What has become of her?"

And his heart answered with the mournful cry:

"Gone! Gone! Gone!"

CHAPTER XXI.

On the night of the abduction Ethel was lifted into the carriage and driven rapidly away. Her companion uttered not a word; in profound silence the trip was made. After what seemed an interminable age, but what was not really more than an hour, the carriage stopped in a poorly lighted street before a dark dismantled-looking house.

The girl, who was half fainting

from fright and suffocation, was lifted out and half carried, half led, up several flights of stairs; then down an entry, then into a room, the door locked and she could hear the steps of one of the men as he walked down the echoing stairs.

She had been half stunned with fright, even now she could not think coherently; so terrified was she that she could hardly stand. Seeing this, her unseen companion made haste to free her from her bonds and mufflers.

As the pillow-case was drawn from her head she eagerly gazed at him—and saw—Horace Jeffreys!

Involuntarily she started back, but he coolly proceeded to loosen the handkerchief from over her mouth, and going to the washstand fetched her a cup of water to moisten her tongue.

"There," said he, gently, "take a little of this and you will feel better. I am sorry I was forced to be so harsh to my treasure. But you must remember the tremendous risk I ran."

He tried to put his arm about her, but the girl repulsed him.

"How dare you! Horace Jeffreys!" cried she, as soon as she could speak, "How dare you look me in the face, a man sunk so low?"

Jeffreys was surprised at her vehemence, one who was usually so mild.

"You assume a high tone!" he said, "but I will soon bring that down. Do you know that you are in my power? I can do with you as I please."

"I can cry for help," said Ethel, who now, brought to bay, showed a strange courage.

"The house is empty; for that reason I rented it, and the windows are fastened."

"I do not believe you," said the girl. "A thief will also tell untruths."

"You are mild in your language," said Jeffreys, smiling.

At the same time Ethel screamed at the top of her voice. "Help! Help! Help!" But only a dreary echo answered her.

"The walls are thick, the windows down and fastened; no sound can penetrate them," said Jeffreys, with an evil smile. "As I just said, you are in my power."

"There is One greater than you, Horace Jeffreys, who will protect me and not suffer you to harm me." She spoke very calmly, her strange courage returning.

Jeffreys was taken aback. Unprotected, helpless, alone in that strange house she turned and faced him, looking him full in the eye with a calm dignity and utter scorn, before which he quailed and his eye fell.

"Why did you bring me here?" she asked.

"Because I was determined Marlow should not marry you."

"What concern is it of yours?" she asked, contemptuously.

Jeffreys was stung by her tone.

"A great deal," he said. "You belonged to me first, and Marlow shall not steal you from me."

"He did not steal me. If you

were the last man on earth, I would not think of you for an instant."

"You loved me once."

"My love is dead——"

"But it can revive," he interrupted.

"And buried," she continued, shaking her head.

"Listen to me, Ethel!" cried Jeffreys, passionately, advancing a step and grasping her wrist. "Listen to ——"

But the girl shrank from his touch.

"Let me go!" she said, and shivered.

"What! Is my very touch so repulsive?" cried Jeffreys.

"Yes," she said, recoiling. "I loathe you!"

Mad with fury, Jeffreys raised his arm as if to strike her, but she looked him calmly in the eye, and his arm fell.

Unable to intimidate, Jeffreys changed his tactics.

"Ethel," he said, humbly, "forgive me! I am half mad. I hardly know what I do. But I love you to distraction. Try and give me back some of that love you once felt for me."

"I cannot," said the girl. "It is dead and buried—you are altered. The man I loved is gone; you are like another creature, I shudder even when I think of you."

"Whether you love me or not," said Jeffreys rising in fresh anger, "you shall never marry that surly fellow Marlow, and you shall marry me."

"I never will."

"You shall."

"I would die sooner,"

"You will not die, but you can be forced into marrying me."

"You can do nothing of the sort," said she, with the boldness of innocence.

"You are in my power."

"God will protect me," said she, calmly; and Jeffreys was overawed.

"I leave you for to-night," he said, "to think the matter over. But to-morrow, beware how you thwart me!" he left the room bolting the door after him.

When he was gone, Ethel sank upon a chair and burst into tears, and cried till she could cry no longer. She was hardly more than a child in years, and, till lately, only a child in experience.

At last she dried her eyes and looked about her. The room was small, and poorly furnished with the bare necessities of life. A bed, two chairs, a table, a washstand in one corner, and the floor was bare. It was an inner room and looked like a cell, having no windows. On one side the wall of the next tenement, on the three others, doors, two leading into other rooms, in one of which Jeffreys was, for she heard him moving about; the third door led into a little hall which had a window, but the blind was locked though the upper sash was open, and that ventilated her room when she raised the transom over the door.

Having explored her prison bounds she returned to her room, and sitting on one of the hard chairs, tried to think.

"Surely, surely, Alex will soon find

me," she kept repeating. "Yes, he and Appler, will hunt me up."

Consoled by this thought, she knelt by her bed, said her simple prayer and laid down, and finally dropped asleep. Strong in her childlike innocence, she did not realize the danger of her position.

She slept soundly and awoke the next morning, bewildered; it was some time before she could remember where she was. At first she was much distressed, till she thought "God will protect me," then she said her simple prayer and was comforted.

By the help of a common little glass she made her toilette, arranging her hair as best she could; she had hardly finished when Jeffreys knocked and entered.

"You are awake," he said. "You were fast asleep when I came in before. Weren't you afraid to sleep?" he asked.

"Afraid of what?" she said.

He was silent for a moment; at last he said, "You are not afraid of me?"

"Afraid of you! Why should I be? Nothing can hurt me when God watches over me."

Jeffreys was silent. He soon took his leave, locking the door at the end of the little hall, so that she was securely imprisoned. After awhile he returned, with a little covered basket, and took thence a plate of toast and a small pot of coffee.

"Here is your breakfast," he said, and then he left her.

She spent the day alone. The window in the hall looked down into a

deserted court or back yard. But even if any one had been there, her cries could hardly reach them, she was so high above. Her prison was very hot and close, her fare was of the most meagre, and she was really hungry when night came and the painful thought of being alone in a deserted house fell on her.

All that day she had cried a great deal, for herself, for Marlow, when she thought of his distress, and for Sarah; she wondered who found her, if she stayed in that dreadful fix till Marlow's return.

She was very warm, she was very hungry as the day wore on, and when darkness fell on her in the lonely deserted house, she was full of a nameless terror. She was really relieved when she heard Jeffreys' step on the stairs coming up, and was glad to hear his voice, for she could not see him.

"What! In the dark?" he said.

"There are no matches."

"Oh, I forgot that necessity of your prison house. Here is your dinner. Are you hungry?"

"Yes; very."

He laughed at her candour. "Well, here it is."

But she soon pushed it away. "I can't eat; the very thought makes me sick. My head aches, it is so hot and close."

"You have no one but yourself to thank. Marry me, and you shall go into the handsomest house in town."

She made no reply, but sat with her head resting on her hand.

"Will you?"

"No,"

"Do you still hate me?"

"No, I loathe you."

"You shall alter your tune before I am done with you."

"Are you going to kill me?"

"No, I am going to break your will."

"Why would you marry a person who detested you?" she asked.

"I will not. You will cease to detest me when I turn you out of here. Listen to me, Ethel. Let us not quarrel. Marry me, and we will go away together. You shall have all that heart could wish."

"No, no," said she, simply, "that is not so. I would have nothing that my heart would wish, neither papa nor Alex."

Jeffreys rose, full of fury. "Don't mention his name to me! I could kill you when I hear you speak it."

"Then let me out, and I won't speak to you ever."

Jeffreys cast upon her a look full of fury. Afraid to trust himself he abruptly departed.

For a week this battle waged, and neither would give way.

Ethel's appetite failed from the confinement, and her head ached from the heat, but she stubbornly refused all his offers and calmly defied him.

Jeffreys had not dreamed of the character and strength the gentle creature had, and viewed her with respect and admiration.

But while she boldly faced him, she cried bitterly during the long, hot, lonely days. Oh, must she die in this dark hole? Why did not Marlow come? Surely he was search-

ing for her! Where was the detective that had helped him find his mother again? Ah, if her father only knew, how would he fly to the rescue of his girl!

Jeffreys tried to threaten and bribe her by turns, but she laughed him to scorn. He had nothing she wanted, and as to his threats about herself, she neither feared nor understood him, so that her very ignorance and purity awed him.

Then he tried to move her through her affections; he knew where her father was: he could not come to her, for he was in great trouble, but he, Jeffreys, would help him out if she would marry him. Ethel was at first much troubled, but after thinking it over, concluded it was a made-up tale, for what trouble could her father be in that Jeffreys could help him out of?

And it was fortunate for her that she took such views, for while Jeffreys made all these offers of marriage he really did not intend carrying them out. He had long had an evil eye on Ethel, ever since her father had disappeared, as Marlow had seen, and for that purpose he had escorted her about to all sorts of places in a pretended search of her father; but the girl's invincible purity and childish ignorance had kept her uncontaminated.

Even now, though a helpless prisoner, Ethel's childlike innocence and faith made for her a defence that held him at bay. So he thought that a mock marriage would be the most convenient way of carrying out his

fell designs. But the girl positively refused to consent, and no threats moved her.

It was beyond the scope of Jeffreys' understanding to comprehend the horror with which he inspired her ever since the unfortunate Jenny had given her one glimpse into the evil world in which he lived.

This frightful revelation had stricken her with terror; he had been transformed from an angel of light into a devil. The very thought of him gave her shuddering fits of horror.

So now death was not as terrible to her as the thought of being his wife, and of anything worse that could befall her she knew nothing.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN terror at being alone, especially at nights, for Jeffreys did not come in till late, and in shuddering horror at being with him, a week passed, and at its close the poor girl felt sick from confinement, insufficient food, and, worse than all, hope deferred.

Would Alex never come? Had he left her to die in that dreadful place? She spent her days in tears, and Jeffreys saw with dismay the havoc that sorrow and confinement were making in her beauty.

He had no idea she would have proved so obdurate. Away from Marlow's influence he thought to have found her as plastic as formerly, and

he had gone so far now that he was afraid to retreat.

The police now were giving him great trouble. He had braved it out quite successfully at first, but he was smart enough to know that discovery must come sooner or later, and with it ruin to himself, unless he could beguile her into a mock marriage or get her out of town.

Although he had been so plausible in clearing himself of suspicion, he had a feeling that he was still shadowed. He had taken the room at Mrs. Brown's for several reasons; among others her daughter's beauty had attracted him, and now that he felt uneasy, he concluded to take his meals there rather than at a fashionable restaurant or his club where the police could better watch and follow his every movement.

From the first he had taken great trouble to evade the police, going home every night, and then sallying forth late to visit his prisoner, and leaving by times the next morning. It was for this reason he had bought cheap meal at a neighbouring restaurant that he might not be noticed taking them to the empty house which he had temporarily rented from a house agent who was a friend of his.

He had hardly gone to his room at Mrs. Brown's when her daughter's warning sent him out of it and back to his prisoner before the toils closed around him. He was a man who thought rapidly, and as he went he laid his plans.

He hurried up the many flights of stairs and into Ethel's presence before

she knew he was there. The girl sat in one of the hard chairs, her face buried in her hands, weeping. As he entered, she hastily wiped her eyes as he lit the gas.

"Ethel," said he abruptly, "would you like to see your father?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Never mind; answer me, yes or no."

"Certainly I would."

"Then I will take you to him, if you promise to go quietly."

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"I am."

She rose and stood before him.

"Swear it."

"I swear." He drew from his pocket a silk travelling cap that he happened to have there, and put it on her head.

"Now, then, come. Remember, no fuss. If you make any, you shall not see him."

He turned off the gas, caught her hand and hurriedly led the way down the dark stairs into the street, helped her into the hack and gave the driver the order:

"Double fare if we reach the depot in time to catch the eight o'clock train."

"All right, sir."

The driver put whip to his horse and hurried off. They barely caught the train. Away through the dark they sped. After her close confinement Ethel enjoyed the ride: she thrust her head out of the car window and drank in the fresh air. At a way station Jeffreys bought her a nice little meal of bread and fruit

and a cup of coffee, so that she was quite refreshed.

By midnight they reached Alburn. A comfortable bed at the hotel, and a nice breakfast the next morning did much towards reviving Ethel's drooping strength, so she felt quite well when she got into the carriage in waiting and drove off.

The September sunshine was delicious to her after her week of close confinement. And as they drove out towards the suburbs, the trees and grass and the pure air that spoke of the country set her young blood to coursing through her veins, and gave a colour to her cheeks and a light to her eyes that they had not known for some time.

Yes, she was lovely! Jeffreys recognized this, and was more determined than ever not to give her up.

The carriage stopped before a pair of massive gates, and, in answer to the driver's ring, a man opened them, and they proceeded up a lovely avenue of spreading elms that almost met overhead. The avenue wound through a beautiful park with lovely flowers and fountains near the house, which was a splendid structure. Many ladies and gentlemen were strolling through the park or seated under the trees.

"What place is this?" Ethel asked.

"It is Alburn Springs," said Jeffreys, gravely, "and here your father has been some time for his health," and he bit his lips to keep from laughing.

"Is papa very ill?"

"Oh, no; he is better now."

"But I am not fixed to go to such a fine place."

"Your father can send for your clothes."

Jeffreys rang at the door and they were shown into the handsome parlour.

"I wish to see Dr. Felder," said Jeffreys to the servant—"in his office," he added in a whisper, as the man passed him. The servant nodded intelligently; he had taken many such messages.

"But papa!" cried Ethel, impatiently, "where is papa?"

"All in good time. Dr. Felder will send for him."

Soon the servant returned. "Step this way, sir."

"Wait a minute, love," said he, gently, "and I will send your father to you."

Ethel was so provoked at the endearing epithet, as he knew she would be, that she drew hastily back, and Jeffreys hurried out and followed the servant to the doctor's private office.

"My name is Hawley," said Jeffreys, introducing himself, "Jeffrey Hawley."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Hawley. Think I have had that pleasure before."

"Yes, I came here with a friend on a painful business, and I was so pleased then with what I saw of your management, that I have come to you now that I am in trouble."

"Yes," said the doctor, as Jeffreys stopped.

"My wife," Jeffreys continued, "has been greatly afflicted lately. She has sustained a terrible grief in the death of her father, and it has unsettled her mind." Jeffreys paused and wiped his eyes.

"It often does," said the doctor, sympathetically, "especially with delicate organizations. Is it melancholia she is threatened with?"

"Far worse. She insists that he is not dead but has mysteriously disappeared, and she constantly besets the police to look for him."

"Ah! that is very sad," said the doctor, who saw so much of this hallucination that it ceased to move him now.

"She was an only child," continued Jeffreys, "and was much caressed and wrapped up in her father, and so terrific was the blow that both her mind and memory gave way. We had only been married two months and she seemed to have forgotten all about it. She declares she is not my wife and seems to detest me."

Here Jeffreys broke down, and sobbed bitterly.

"That is dreadful," said the doctor, "but I will say for your comfort that that is a very common form of mental delusion."

"Yes?" Jeffreys wiped his eyes. "Then you can give me some hope that she can be restored?"

"Oh! certainly. There is not much trouble if it be taken in hand in time. How long has she been affected?"

"Six weeks. Ever since her father's death."

"I wish I could have had her from the very first; it could have been much easier managed then."

"I could not bear the thought," said Jeffreys, sobbing afresh.

"Your feeling was very natural, my dear sir, but it was cruel kindness to your wife."

"'Tis hard enough to bear at best," said Jeffreys, wiping his eyes, "but when it takes the form of aversion, it makes it unendurable. Not only does poor Nelly insist that she is not my wife, and refuses to be called by my name, but she declares she is not Ellen Doyle (her maiden name), but calls herself Ethel Dorset. This name made a powerful impression on her mind in consequence of its being the name of the heroine of the last novel she ever read before her mind gave way. It seems to have taken hold of her fancy, and to no other name will she answer. I've been forced to give in and call her Ethel, for she ignores Ellen entirely, and it throws her into a transport of rage to be called my wife. I tell you all this to give you some idea of the case."

"And very properly. Mr. Hawley, I only wish all the friends of my patients were as thoughtful and intelligent; it would be a great assistance to us," said the doctor, who saw nothing strange in all this, as he had patients who declared themselves angels, the sun, moon and stars, and a menagerie of animals besides, so he was quite ready to credit Jeffreys' simple statement.

"Now, having given you this hint, will you come and see my wife?"

Please excuse her dress, I entrapped her into coming in whatever she had on; did not stop even for her bonnet. She thinks this is a watering-place, and her father is here for his health."

"Certainly," said the doctor, "I understand."

And he accompanied him to the parlour.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ETHEL was standing at the window looking out at the pleasant view. She turned eagerly as they entered.

"Where is papa?" she asked, looking disappointed.

"Here is the doctor, my darling, who will tell you all about him," said Jeffreys, tenderly.

Ethel drew back with an indignant look. "I want my father," said she. "He—this man—said he was here."

"So he is," said the doctor. "We will go and look for him."

"Is he better?"

"Much better."

"Does he know I'm coming?"

"I've sent for him."

Ethel turned to the window to look out.

"Come, Mrs. Hawley," said the doctor, wishing to get her out of the room.

"Nelly, the doctor speaks to you," said Jeffreys.

Ethel continued anxiously looking.

"My darling wife! be reasonable, and come."

She turned angrily. "How dare you speak to me so?"

"This man is nothing to me," said she, speaking to the doctor. "He is a wicked man, and has treated me cruelly, stealing me away from my friends and shutting me up. But I will tell papa when I see him. He shall know it all. And what a false friend you have been!"

Jefireys made no answer, but wiped his eyes.

"Well, if you won't acknowledge to being my wife, you will surely admit that you are Ellen Doyle," he said, at last.

Ethel made no reply, but turned once more to the window.

"Will you kindly tell me your name, madam?" said the doctor.

"Ethel Dorset," she answered, with a quiet dignity that staggered him.

"Then, Miss Dorset, please accompany me, and I will try and find your father."

"With great pleasure, sir," said Ethel, and joyfully followed him through a spacious hall down a wide cross hall into which two broad flights of stairway ran. Ethel looked about her in admiration; it was indeed the finest building she had ever seen.

This was really the convalescent hall where the more sane patients stayed. One side was given up to the males, and the other to the females, and the two stairways came from the two sides; but all had access to the middle hall to go out into the grounds, though they were required

to go out of different doors at the two ends of the cross halls.

All of these arrangements were lost on Ethel; she saw ladies and gentlemen going up and down the stairways, and going and returning to the pleasure grounds, to all of whom Dr. Felder smilingly bowed, and she saw nothing strange in their deportment.

Leaving the convalescent hall, the party crossed a small courtyard and passed through the gate that led into the yard that enclosed the smaller building.

This wing was separated from the main building a distance of fifty or sixty feet, and had been built later, as had also the one on the left, as the needs of the asylum required. These wings were used for the worst class of patients, the extreme upper corner of each being devoted to the violent and dangerous ones.

In the courtyard of the wing they were met by a nice-looking gentleman whom Dr. Felder introduced as his friend, Dr. Parker. He was, in fact, the physician of that ward, and he bade a nurse, whom Ethel mistook for a servant, to call Mrs. Maxey.

"Dr. Parker, Miss Doyle is——"

"Dorset is my name," corrected Ethel.

"Beg pardon—Miss Dorset—is looking for her father," continued Dr. Felder.

"Have you seen him here?" Ethel asked eagerly.

"I am not acquainted with him," said Dr. Parker, blandly.

Here a smiling, middle-aged,

motherly-looking woman came hurrying up, and Dr. Felder introduced her as Mrs. Maxey.

"She is our housekeeper," he explained, "and while you are at the springs, Miss Doyle—pardon—Dorset—I want her to take care of you."

"Thank you," said Ethel, "but my father is here, so I won't trouble you."

"True," said the doctor, "but it is well to have a female friend in a place like this."

"You are very kind," said the girl, gratefully.

"Go with Mrs. Maxey, Miss Dorset, and I will send a servant to call your father, and send him to you at Mrs. Maxey's parlour."

"Please send him at once," said the girl.

While she was talking to Dr. Felder, she saw Jeffreys conversing eagerly with Dr. Parker and Mrs. Maxey. He talked very rapidly, and they kept up a succession of nods of assent. Then the housekeeper came to her and said:

"Come with me this way, my dear."

Ethel followed her to her parlour, and took her seat by the window, waiting and looking anxiously for her father, but he did not come. Mrs. Maxey went off and left her by the window. Tired of waiting, she stood on the piazza on which the window opened, but still he came not.

A pleasant-faced maid servant dusted the furniture of the room as Ethel sat there. When she went

into the porch the woman began rearranging the drapery of the curtain, and when she walked out into the yard and up to the wire fence with its barbed top, the woman sauntered after her.

"Where is Mrs. Maxey?" Ethel asked her.

"Gone to attend to something. She'll be back soon," said the woman, smiling.

"Dr. Felder promised to send a servant to call my father," said the girl, anxiously.

"Well, he did, but it seems he has gone out riding," said the servant.

Presently Jeffreys came sauntering by on the other side of the fence. "Ethel, have you seen your father?" he asked, with an ugly smile.

"No," said the girl, "he hasn't come yet. Where is he?"

Jeffreys shrugged his shoulders.

"Is he out there?"

"I can't say."

"I'll go and hunt for him myself." She tried to open the gate, but it was fastened. "Open it," said she, "I wish to pass through."

"It is locked."

"Locked? That is strange! Do they lock gates at the Springs?"

"Certainly not. But this place is no Springs."

"What is it then?" she asked, with a sudden misgiving.

"A lunatic asylum. And you will stay here, my dear, till you acknowledge you are my wife!"

The girl's hands grasped the iron bars of the gate, and clung to them

for support, while her wildly dilating eyes gazed on Jeffreys.

"An asylum!" she gasped.

"A lunatic asylum!" he repeated, in a harsh voice. "And here you will stay till you agree to do as I bid you."

"My father——"

"That was but a ruse to get you here."

The look of horror, repulsion, aversion, that swept over her face told Jeffreys that he had made a blunder and gone too far.

"And here you shall stay," he repeated, savagely, "till you agree to obey me."

"That I never will!" said she, rallying.

"Then you live and die here."

Just then a frightful scream was uttered behind her. Startled, terrified, Ethel turned and saw a wild face with unkempt locks pressed against the iron bars of an upper window. While a torrent of oaths and yells poured from its mouth followed by hideous laughter.

"Oh!" cried the girl, holding her hands tight over her ears. "Oh! how awful! Oh! how could you treat me so?" She looked reproachfully at Jeffreys as she shook and gasped with fright and horror. And a pang of shame passed over him to torture a creature so innocent and gentle.

The demoniacal laugh died away and the screams arose once more. Then a bedlamite in the next cell joined in and they tried to rival each other in their yells and bursts of

demoniacal mirth. Jeffreys himself shivered as he heard them. He tried to get through the gate to come to her, but it was locked.

Ethel, divining his intention, turned and fled from him. She ran toward some people advancing toward her, then halted abruptly.

"Oh!" cried she, "are these all crazy too? Oh! what shall I do? Oh! Lord help me!"

Here the nurse, who had drawn off to allow husband and wife to converse undisturbed, ran up to find her white and quivering.

"Oh!" gasped the girl, shivering, shrinking from her. "Are you crazy?"

"No, no," said the nurse, kindly. "I'm not crazy. I'm a nurse. Come with me. Don't be frightened. Lean on me!"

"Oh!" cried Ethel, clinging to her, and bursting into tears. "Oh! I'm so frightened! Don't let them get me!"

"They shan't, they shan't. Come with me." She led her charge back toward Mrs. Maxey's parlour, and out of sight of the lunatics.

Ethel sank upon the steps; she could go no farther. She sat there clinging to the nurse, and weeping bitterly.

"There! there!" said the nurse, holding her in her arms, and soothing her as if she were a child. "There, there; calm yourself, dear."

"Oh!" sobbed the girl. "It was such a shock! I thought these were Springs, and I would see papa—and

it is a lunatic asylum he has beguiled me into."

"Well, well; try and not think about it," said the nurse.

"But I am not crazy!" cried Ethel, indignantly.

"Very well. When the doctors find out that they will let you out."

"Will they?"

"Certainly. Why should they keep you here?"

"Well, I'll go and tell them," said Ethel, wiping her eyes.

"My dear," said the sympathetic nurse, "telling ain't all. You'll have to prove it by your actions. Plenty of them talk as straight as you do and are as crazy as can be."

"How is that possible?"

"Most of 'em, miss, are only crazy on one particular point; off of that they are as sane as anybody, and you would not suspect it, unless you happened to get on their weakness."

"But those dreadful ones!" and Ethel shuddered.

"Oh! them's bedlamites. But there ain't many of them, and they are shut up tight and fast to keep them from tearing people to pieces, or themselves for that matter."

"How awful!" Ethel shuddered again.

"Yes, miss," said the nurse, who was watching her closely while she talked, and thought how sane she looked. "Yes, miss, 'tis a dreadful thing to lose one's mind."

"Tell me, dear nurse——"

"My name is Polly," interrupted the nurse.

"Is it? Well, tell me, dear, good

Polly, how am I to get out of here, and away from that wicked man?"

"Oh, he doesn't stay here," said the nurse; "he'll soon go away."

"Will he? Then that is one good thing. But what must I do?"

"Try and behave quite rational, so that the doctors will see you are quite sane," said the nurse, rather non-plussed, for she was ignorant of the new patient's supposed mania.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HERE Mrs. Maxey came up. "Well," said she, smilingly, "have you and Polly made friends?"

"Yes, indeed; and she is just as good and kind as she can be," said Ethel, looking gratefully on her new attendant. "But, Mrs. Maxey," she continued, earnestly, "I find that this is an asylum, and I am not crazy."

"Of course not," said Mrs. Maxey.

"Then won't you have me turned out?"

"Just as soon as you can prove that to the doctors, Miss Doyle."

"My name is Ethel Dorset," said the new patient.

"Well, Miss Dorset, speak and act so as to convince the doctor of your sanity."

"What shall I say and do?" asked the puzzled girl.

"First answer to your real name—Ellen Doyle."

"But it's not my name," said the

girl in mild surprise. "I never heard it before. You've all got me mixed with some one else."

The matron gently shook her head. "Your real name is Mrs. Hawley."

"Mrs. Hawley!" cried Ethel, in open-eyed amazement. "What are you talking about?"

"Hawley is your husband's name."

"I have no husband, and I never heard of that name before," and Ethel burst into girlish laughter. "You are surely confounding me with some one else."

"Hawley is the name of the gentleman who brought you here."

"His name is not Hawley. His name is Jeffreys."

"That is his given name," said the matron. "Jeffrey Hawley is his name."

"Horace Jeffreys is his name," persisted the girl.

The matron waved that point. "You will at least admit that he is your husband?"

"No!" cried the girl indignantly, "I will not! He's nothing to me. I hate and detest him! Listen! He broke into our house and choked poor Sarah and muffled me," and she proceeded to give the matron a full account of the whole affair.

The matron listened attentively. "Poor thing, how she raves!" she thought. "I suppose the husband did have to shut her up." "That was dreadful," she said aloud.

"Yes, indeed, and now won't you let me out?"

"Not just yet, dear. Not till the doctor sees more of you."

"Oh!" cried Ethel, wringing her hands. "Oh, indeed, indeed, I am not crazy!—Oh! if Alex. could only find me! Write to Alex.—Let me write to him—won't you?"

"Certainly. Who is Alex?"

"Mr. Marlow—the gentleman who took care of me—papa's friend and—and—my lover. We were to be married whenever we found papa."

"Ah! Indeed! She's started off now," thought the matron.

"Wasn't it queer? he lost his mother and I my father, and we looked and looked up and down; we looked and could not find them. That is how Horace Jeffreys got me here to look for my father, he said this was the Alburn Springs! But as this is an asylum of course he is not here."

"My dear," said the matron, pitifully, "don't fret about your father; he is dead."

"Oh, no! Oh, no! don't say that!" cried Ethel, bursting into tears and sobbing bitterly. "He's not dead, he is alive; I know he is alive—I feel it way down in my heart. He's only wandered off. Oh! papa! papa! come back to your girl—your poor little girl—who needs you so much—so much!"

The matron and nurse looked at her sorrowfully; inured as they were to such scenes they were touched by her genuine grief and distress.

"There! there!" said the nurse resorting to her usual formula to sooth, "I wouldn't fret. It will all turn out right."

Soothed at last, not so much by

her words as by her sympathetic manner, Ethel dried her eyes, and returned to the matron's parlor.

"May I write a letter?" she asked.

"Certainly, my dear," said the matron. "As many as you choose. I will lend you my portfolio until your things come."

"They won't come," said the girl, "for I'm going to leave just as soon as this letter is received."

"Very likely," thought the matron, but she handed up the portfolio all the same and Ethel began to write.

She first thought of telling her whole story, but found that would take too much time and paper, besides she was too nervous to write coherently, so she contented herself with a short note. "I'll tell him everything when we meet," she thought so she wrote:

"DEAREST ALEX.—Horace Jeffreys has hidden me in the lunatic asylum. Please come and get me out. He told me papa was here and so beguiled me in. Come at once to your loving

"ETHEL."

"What is the name of this asylum?" she asked the nurse.

"Hopedale private asylum," said the nurse.

So she added:

"This asylum is the Hopedale Private Asylum at Alburn. Come love, come at once.

"ETHEL,"

"Poor fellow! he'll be so frightened when he hears I'm shut up among the lunatics," she thought. "What can I do to comfort him?" So she wrote:

"P.S. 2d.—I send you these three kisses—O O O."

"P.S. 3d.—The O's are where I kissed the place."

This she faithfully did with tender gravity, folded the sheet in an envelope, sealed and directed it to Marlow, and handed it to the nurse.

"Post this, please, dear Polly," she said.

The nurse took it. "The sweet innocent!" she thought, and carried the note to the matron.

Mrs. Maxey immediately opened and read it, then shook her head.

"Poor soul! as daft as she can be!" Then she took it to Dr. Parker.

"This may give you some clue to the new patient's mania."

Dr. Parker read it. "I don't clearly understand it," he said, and took it to Dr. Felder, who chanced at the time to be talking to Horace Jeffreys.

Dr. Felder read it, and then turned to the supposed husband.

"Your presence is very opportune, Mr. Hawley," he said, "perhaps you can throw some light on this matter."

Then Jeffreys took the poor little note and read it, and a black wave of jealous rage swept over him. But he drew his face down into a look of deep sadness, and said:

"This is but another proof of what I told you. That infernal book—please excuse the language, but my feelings overcome me—that unfortunate book has taken complete possession of her, my poor wife's mind. This Alex. Marlow is a fictitious character, I think the hero of the book, as Ethel Dorset is the heroine. It is this grotesqueness of her affliction that makes it so hard to bear. Her delusion about her father I can sympathize with, coming as it does from the shock of his death. But this other—" he broke off, overcome by his emotion.

"Certainly. We see," said the physicians.

"I was just telling Dr. Felder," said Jeffreys, turning to Dr. Parker, "that I would be in the neighborhood some days. I wish to see how my poor wife gets on; whether she improves."

"I tell you at once, it is not advisable, Mr. Hawley," said Dr. Felder.

"Yes, I know; but still I am so utterly wretched about her, that I can't bear to leave her among strangers till she gets a little more used to them."

"'Tis very natural," said Dr. Felder, who saw so many phases of wretchedness, and so many phases of lunacy that he stood ready to credit anything that anybody told him. The wildest flights of the fancy never exceeded the realities that came under his actual experience. So he readily believed all that Jeffreys said. But still the name Marlow had a vaguely familiar sound to him, but

he could not recall where he had heard it. He met so many people he could not remember their names.

The episode of the young man demanding to be allowed to search the asylum for his mother, had almost passed out of his mind, and his name entirely so. The man not returning had convinced him at the time that he was a crank.

He now gave an unwilling consent that Jeffreys might see his wife for the next week, but after that he must cease to visit her. "It will harm more than help her," he said, "and only retard her recovery."

So Jeffreys, seeing that he had but a short time in which to work out his plans, bestirred himself. He begged to be allowed to see a friend of his who was there, a Mr. Rollins.

But Dr. Felder said, "Not to-day; it is too late now. The man is a violent subject and has been locked up. You can not see him till to-morrow. Come in the morning."

So Jeffreys was fain to take his leave and return to Alburn, concocting new devilment as he went.

The letter sent to Marlow, Ethel became calm. "Now," she thought, "he will surely come and take me out of this awful place."

She was so much terrified at the thought of sleeping alone that Polly good-naturedly offered to share her room, and Ethel gladly acceded. But some of the better patients had attacks in the night that caused them to scream and screech, and frightened Ethel almost out of her senses.

Seeing her nervous state the next

morning, Dr. Parker ordered her to be transferred to the convalescent ward.

"Will Polly go with me!" she asked.

"No, Polly belongs here."

"Then I can't go," she said. "I can't leave Polly. It don't make much difference," she added, smiling, "for Alex will soon come for me; I wrote him this morning where Jeffreys had hidden me."

"And you expect him?"

"Certainly! Just as soon as he gets my letter he'll just post here. Poor fellow! I know he is half distracted now."

"Take her out in the grounds of the convalescent ward, Polly, and let her walk about there in the open air; she looks pale," said the doctor, "and keep her from seeing any disagreeable sight—you understand?"

Polly nodded.

"Poor thing!" said Dr. Parker to the matron, who was passing. "Isn't it a pity? So young and so pretty!"

"She may get over it."

"I doubt it. She seems peculiarly cranked—not dangerous you know—but warped."

"Are all these people crazy?" Ethel asked, as she and her companion walked about among the big oaks and elms, and saw the company restlessly passing to and fro.

Polly nodded. "But they are harmless," she added. "Every blessed one has a crank, and you might talk to them for days and even weeks before you happened to hit on it. Why there's one of the gentlemen who thinks he's a rooster, and the doctors

thought they had cured him, for he quit crowing and trying to perch up on a roost when he went to bed, and they were about to send him home, when all of a sudden something upset him and he took to flapping his wings and crowing and crowing till he had to be muffled for fear he'd burst his biler."

"Mercy!" ejaculated Ethel. "But he isn't fierce, is he?"

"Not now, he isn't, but I've seed the time when he crowed himself into an excitement, and tried to pick and spur the ladies and gentlemen. There was one little old man that he mistook for a bantam rooster, and he spurred him so hard that the keepers had to tie him up by the heels for a week."

"How awful!" said Ethel, but she laughed.

"Yes, miss. Sich curus things some of them is possessed of. One gentleman thought he was a polar bear, and he went round hugging people till he well nigh squeezed the breath out of 'em. He is very strong, and he pretty near broke in an old lady's ribs one day."

"Wasn't she scared?"

"She was very mad, so she turned in and scratched him. You see she thought she was a cat."

"Mercy!" cried Ethel. "What next?"

"Oh, there's all kinds of curus creeturs here, and you can't keep from laughing to save your life. But you must mind how you do it before 'em, or contradict 'em either—unless you want to fight."

Ethel viewed these strange gentry from a respectful distance, but at last, feeling tired, she and Polly seated themselves on a seat under a great oak.

CHAPTER XXV.

AFTER a while a portly, middle-aged lady came up and spoke to Polly, who rose and offered her a seat.

"Is this a new arrival?" asked the lady.

"Yes, ma'am," said Polly, but she carefully refrained from introducing them to each other.

The lady seated herself, and said, "Since you are a new-comer I will tell you all about these people here. It is very sad, my dear, to see anyone who has lost their mind."

"Yes, ma'am," said Ethel, and wondered if she was one.

"Yonder goes a fine example," and she pointed to a tall, handsome woman who walked along with an imperious air. "Now, that woman declares she is perfectly sane, but anyone can see she is crazy. She hates her husband. They are both shut up here, and they hate each other like poison, and for that reason the keepers have to part them. Isn't it droll?" cried the lady, laughing.

"No, I think it is very sad," said Ethel, gravely.

"Pshaw! you have no sense of humour. Pity, in one so young and pretty," said the lady, who, like all

lunatics, had no sympathy for others. "Yonder comes another crank. She says she is the Queen of Sheba. Did you ever! A plain, common woman to take up such an idea!"

Here the Queen of Sheba came sailing up.

"How are you to-day, my good creature?" said Ethel to her new acquaintance.

"Good creature!" returned the other. "Do you know who you are talking to? I'm the Queen of Sheba."

"Pshaw!" said the other. "How can you be so absurd, when you know you are nothing but a simple American citizen."

"I know nothing of the sort. I am the Queen of Sheba, the beloved of King Solomon, and 'tis nothing but low envy that caused you to speak so, Queen Victoria."

"Envy?" cried Queen Victoria. "The idea!"

"'Tis envy, because you have not my kingly lover, but have to content yourself with Albert of Saxe Coburg Gotha, a mere German princeling!" retorted the Queen of Sheba, who seemed well posted in modern history.

Queen Victoria turned very red in the face. "You shan't speak slightly of my dead husband. Common humanity would dictate that even the veriest savage would reverence the dead. And you—you are no Queen of Sheba. You had better call yourself Candace of Ethiopia."

"I'll do nothing of the sort! I'm no black nigger!"

"Come, come, ladies, don't quarrel,"

said the keeper. "Remember your high station. Move on, Queen of Sheba. Queen Victoria, I am surprised at you!"

Queen Victoria hung her head. Ethel arose with all speed.

"Let me go," said she to Polly, who readily agreed.

Queen of Sheba uttered a joyful cry of triumph, when suddenly there was heard a great commotion at the left wing of the asylum, where the violent male patients lived. Loud curses and screams resounded. A great struggle was going on in an upstairs room, and then through a window of it a man came flying and fell almost senseless in the grass. The maniac who stood at the window shouted fiercely, and a volley of oaths followed. All at once he was jerked suddenly back, and then his clamour ceased.

"What is it?" Ethel asked, and Polly went off to inquire, not being above curiosity herself.

When she returned, the fallen man had been picked up and carried into the convalescent ward. After a little hesitation, Polly said:

"Mr. Hawley, the gentleman who brought you here, went to see an acquaintance he had, a Mr. Rollins, a violent lunatic at times, and all at once he fell on him and half killed him, and then fired him through the window. He was a great idiot to go into his room. Rollins is nothing to fool with."

"I don't want him killed, but I am glad he beat him," said Ethel. "He deserves every blow he gets, for

he is a wretch. You don't know how bad he is."

Here a gentleman who was passing lifted his hat and made her a courtly bow. "You seem a stranger here," said he, smiling.

"Yes, sir," said Ethel, thinking he was one of the doctors.

"When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday. I was entrapped into coming here," said Ethel, fearing he might think she was crazy, and resolved to tell her story on all occasions. "But I am perfectly sane. I have written my friends of the trick that was played on me, and I expect them every day."

The gentleman smiled and nodded his head. "They all say that," said he to the nurse. "I never yet knew one who was out of his mind."

"I am not out of mine, that is very certain," said the girl, a little indignantly.

"Certainly, madam; I have no idea you are," said he, changing his tone to one full of sympathy. "And I think it shameful that such a trick should have been served you. It is said that misery loves company, and if it is any consolation to you to know, you would be astonished to know how many there are confined here in just that way. Beguiled here—abducted, you might say."

"But why is that done?"

"It is to the interest of the doctors, and often of the relations. They conspire to make a corner, you might say, on liberty."

"I don't understand you," said Ethel, bewildered.

"Don't you? Let me try and explain. When people have a relative, one that's a harmless crank, who is rich, they do their best to send him to an asylum, so that they may be made the guardian of his property, and so spend his money. And when they can't get the regular article in the way of a crank, they manufacture one out of a well-to-do relation or people that stand in their way and clap them in here. And it is to the interest of the doctors to keep their asylums full."

"But it is very wicked of them," said Ethel, horrified.

"Wicked, of course, but man will sell his soul for lucre."

"Mr. Vincent, ain't you saying what's not so?" asked Polly, mildly.

"No, my good girl, I know exactly what I am saying. Be pleased not to interrupt me. I myself, my dear young lady, am a case in point. I was a broker, doing a heavy business in New York."

"Yes, sir," said Ethel, respectfully.

"I was a bull."

Ethel stared. Here was a man to match the rooster gentleman.

"But the bears pulled down the stocks in which I was principally interested, and I broke. But I did not give up. I began to invest in something that the bears could not reach nor destroy. I discovered the secret that men of all ages have been interested in—I discovered the philosopher's stone!—and everything I touched turned to gold! At last I was rich! rich! rich!—On all sides of me I saw the yellow piles! I re-

solved I would buy New York—the Government—the world—and be monarch of all I surveyed—when my relations—sordid wretches! eager to reap the benefits of my invention, snatched me up, brought me under a strong guard, like a felon, and lodged me here! And now they spend my money while I curse my fate in this prison—worse than prison, for here I am shut up with lunatics!"

A look of despair passed over his face which was quite handsome. But Ethel shrunk from him, and nervously clutched the arm of Polly—Great mercy! he was mad!—mad as a March hare!

After a moment of moody silence he raised his eyes and rested them on his pretty listener; then a smile lit up his face, and he said:

"I see that the old proverb of misery loves company does not hold good in your case, but it does in mine. It is a comfort to me to know that others besides myself have been treated as I have been. That mine is not an exceptional case."

"But I am not crazy," Ethel protested.

"Certainly not," said he, gallantly, "I never for an instant entertained such an idea. Like myself, you have been the victim of fortune—misfortune in our case! But," continued he, with a melancholy smile, "let us not look only on the dark side. Things might have been worse. We could have been confined in dark cells."

"Yes, indeed!" said Ethel (thinking where she had been imprisoned),

"and all alone, too; and here I have Polly."

"Certainly, and Polly is quite a blessing," said he, smiling, and at the same time divining that she had been confined somewhere before she came there.

"Thank you," said Polly, laughing.

"Besides Polly, we have this park. I don't know what I would do but for these grounds. I find them far more companionable than people. The wind murmuring through the trees; the sunshine and shadows; the white floating clouds; the flowers, that spring among the grass; all, all are my friends, and friends that comfort me." He stooped and plucked a wild blossom. "Look at the delicate tinting of this little flower. What artist can equal it? I have a fine water-colour collection at home," he continued, as Ethel gazed at him in dumb amazement, "they are by the best artists" (this was so, he was quite a *dilletante*), "but not one of them could compare to this tiny blossom, touched by nature's brush."

"The work of a greater hand," said Ethel, gravely, as she drew nearer and looked at the flower.

"Yes? You belong to the religious party," said he, smiling.

"I must go now, Miss," said Polly, in an undertone. "You can stay out here with Mr. Vincent; he is perfectly harmless, and when you take him off his gold stone, nicer than anybody here. If you get tired of him, go to the Queen of Sheba; so you don't touch on that, old Mrs. Bowers is as nice an old body as you would wish

to meet. I knowed her afore she come here."

To this arrangement Ethel unwillingly acceded, and saw Polly leave her with many misgivings. Her new companion seemed instantly to divine her uneasiness.

"Don't be alarmed," said he, "I'll protect you from these lunatics, though, in fact, they are perfectly harmless; the savage ones are all locked up."

But in spite of his soothing remark, Ethel shook with fright.

"Suppose," thought she, "he should suddenly go mad and grab me.!"

Afraid to move for fear of offending him; afraid to stay for fear of his clutching her, she was in a frightful quandary.

CHAPTER XXVI.

UNCONSCIOUS of the anguish he threw her into, Mr. Vincent began to talk on other subjects, and surprised Ethel by his information. Once off his philosopher's stone hallucination, he was a perfectly sane man. He talked of his travels at home and abroad, and made himself very agreeable.

Ethel was astonished; by degrees she forgot his lunacy. And he skillfully drew from her all of her story except her engagement to Marlow. Then he gallantly escorted her in to dinner at the convalescent hall, and

she spent a very pleasant day with him.

But the next morning Polly suddenly resumed charge of her in the convalescent grounds and advised her not to let Mr. Vincent pay her so much attention.

"In the first place, he is crazy," said Polly, "and not a fit beau for you on that account; and then, as you're another man's wife, 'tisn't proper."

"I am not another man's wife," said Ethel, hotly—"not that I care for Mr. Vincent, poor crazy creature! only he's amusing, and I am surprised at you, Polly, saying so, when I tell you, time and again, 'tis false."

Seeing her excitement, Polly let the matter drop, and they sat for awhile in the shade under a tree, then Ethel said:

"Polly, when can I hear from Alex.?"

"Most any time, Miss," said the nurse.

"I came here Tuesday," Ethel continued; "to-day is Thursday; surely by to-morrow Alex. will come."

"The doctors are going to give the patients a ball to-morrow night," said Polly, trying to divert her thoughts.

"Are they? I think it is so strange in the doctors to treat me as they do. They must see I am not crazy. Now, Polly, do you think I am crazy?"

"No, Miss," said the nurse, lying boldly.

"Well, if you can see it, isn't it strange they can't?"

"If you would give in a little,

Miss," said the nurse, artfully. "Now the doctors think you should be named Ellen Doyle, and you won't answer to that name."

"But I am not named Ellen Doyle. Why should they say so? I know my own name best."

"Your husband—I mean Mr. Hawley—says so."

"Mr. Hawley tells stories, and his name is Jeffreys."

"Well, Miss, so long as you persist in saying all of that, you will stay in here."

"Do you mean to say I must agree to call myself Ellen Doyle before I can get out?"

"Yes, Miss. And you are registered as Mrs. Hawley, though your husband has given in so far as to agree to your calling yourself by your maiden name of Ellen Doyle. And if your friends should ask for you as Ethel Dorset, the doctors wouldn't know anything about you, for they can't keep up with all the fancy names the patients give themselves."

Ethel looked startled.

"I tell you all this, Miss, for your own good," said the nurse, "for I likes you."

"Well, Polly, you are very good. And, Polly, won't you please fix it so that when Alex. comes he'll find me?—Oh! it would be dreadful to have him turned off."

"It would indeed, Miss," said the nurse, viewing her with compassion. "Now look at that lady yonder," pointing to a tall woman Ethel had noticed the day before. "Her name is Rollins; both she and her husband

are in here. They say they are not named Rollins, and that they are not husband and wife, and foam at the mouth when you mention it to them. But his brother fetched them, and told just how they would act, and they abused him like a pickpocket. They are two of the most violent patients here, and they each call themselves some fancy name, but I've forgotten if I've ever heard them."

"I am sure," said Ethel, weeping, "it is very hard. I am named Ethel Dorset. I am not Jeffreys' wife and never will be, and to be locked up here for telling the truth, is hard indeed."

Here Mr. Vincent came up, and Ethel hastily dried her eyes. He begged to know the cause of her distress, and after a while she told him, making no mention, however, of Marlow.

He was as sane as sane could be, and full of sympathy and gave her much wholesome advice. So, in spite of Polly's admonitions, Ethel persisted in receiving his attentions, for he amused her and took her mind off her troubles, and she spent most of the day in his company.

But late that afternoon, as Polly called her to go into the other ward, Mr. Vincent could hold in no longer.

"What! are you going already?" he asked.

"Already!" repeated Ethel, laughing. "I've been here a long time."

"Does it appear so to you? To me it seems hardly an hour."

"It has been a whole long day," said the girl, laughing.

"Nature but repeats herself in her dealings with men," said Mr. Vincent, with a melancholy smile. "Do you remember Jacob served for Rachel seven years, and it seemed to him but a day for the love he had for her."

"Oh, well, he was in love," said Ethel, edging away, "and not accountable."

"Then, I, like Jacob, am not accountable. I love you, my little girl. The time you have been here seems but a few hours—but such hours! full of sunshine that brightened my dreary imprisonment."

"Mr. Vincent! Mr. Vincent!" cried Ethel, shrinking back, "don't! don't!"

"You think it foolish in a poor prisoner? and so it would be if I could not escape from here. But, for your sweet sake, I will compromise with my relations. I am rich, for I have the philosopher's stone. I will offer them money. I will bow my pride and stoop to bribe them, and, like Jacob, it will seem as nothing, doing it for love of you, and in return can you not love me?"

"I cannot. Indeed, I cannot," cried Ethel in great distress.

"But why?" he persisted.

"Because—because—I do not love you," faltered the frightened girl.

"But you can learn to. The devotion of a lover will win you."

She shook her head.

"But why not?" he insisted.

She made no answer, but tried to get through the gate. He placed his hand upon it and held it fast,

"Give me a reason before you go."

"I am already engaged, I love another," she faltered; "for that reason I am shut up here."

Mr. Vincent's eyes flashed, "Then," cried he, furiously, "I think you have flirted most abominably with me—trifled with my most sacred feelings! How dare you, false one?" He seized her arm and shook her.

Ethel screamed, and Polly ran from Mrs. Maxey's parlor. At sight of her, Mr. Vincent let go of Ethel's arm, but he still barred the way, till the nurse came and forced him to open the gate and let Ethel through. And she only did this by threats of reporting him to the doctors and having him shut up in solitary confinement till he got over his tantrum.

At last he snarlingly gave way, and Ethel, more dead than alive, passed through, and clinging to Polly, hurried into Mrs. Maxey's parlor.

"You see, Miss, I warned you about that! He's all the time falling in love with the lady patients and making a fuss."

"Oh! I did not know crazy people fell in love," gasped Ethel, "I thought they always fought."

"They does both," said the nurse.

Ethel received such a severe fright that the next day she refused to budge farther than the matron's parlor where she sat and read a book, "The Mysteries of Udolpho," some of the literature of Mrs. Maxey's youthful days. Over this book of horrors she sat spellbound, and for the time forgot her troubles.

CHAPTER XXVII.

DR. FELDER spared no pains with his patients, trying by turns the soothing effects of amusement and religion, and to this end he had both a ball room and a chapel in the convalescent building. But the lunatics generally preferred the ball room. The floor of this apartment was waxed as smooth as glass, and the hilarious lunatics slid over it as though they were skating.

At first sight one would never suppose anything was amiss with the company, most of them behaving with the utmost decorum. The only queer proceeding being that some of them would not stand still whether it was their time to dance or not; they would skip up and down in their places if nowhere else.

Ethel was extremely unwilling to go to this ball, and Polly had to use great persuasion.

"You can't help laughing," said the nurse, "to see how some of them curus ones dances."

"I'm afraid," said Ethel.

"I'll be close to you," said Polly, "I want to go and I can't if you don't."

So Ethel finally consented, and Mr. Vincent sent her a lovely bouquet of roses to wear, and a note of apology for his behaviour.

"Forgive," said he, "the wild ebullitions of a too passionate heart?"

"I'm afraid, Polly," said the girl.

"Poor man!" said the nurse, "Mr.

Vincent's heart is just like tow. He's always in love with the pretty lady patients, and he is nothing to be afraid of."

Thus urged, Ethel suffered Polly to put the flowers in her hair and on her breast, and so brightened up and made her grey dress look quite smart. And chaperoned by Polly, she went to her first ball.

Mr. Vincent met them at the door and begged Ethel to dance with him.

"Go, go," whispered Polly, and Ethel unwillingly acceded.

As luck would have it, the dance was a waltz. Mr. Vincent danced well; he had once been quite a society man, and with his pretty companion in his arms, whirled round the room, the object of much admiration.

"I wish it could last for ever," he whispered as the floated over the smooth floor.

"Wouldn't you get tired?" she ventured to ask.

"Never!" he answered, passionately.

Ethel was glad when the dance ended, and she was relegated to Polly's care; Polly was busy flirting with one of the keepers.

There were plenty of attendants, both male and female, to keep the company in order.

Ethel was greatly amused, and as the dances followed each other in quick succession, she had plenty of engagements. Soon the gentleman who thought he was a rooster begged for the honour of her hand, and off they marched to join the dancers. Both the Queen of Sheba and Queen

Victoria took part in this set to Ethel's surprise. And her majesty of Sheba, who at home was a strict Baptist, footed it handsomely. Nothing could exceed her curtesies. And Queen Victoria skipped with the agility of a girl of sixteen.

No one would have supposed from the solemn looks of Ethel's partner that he had ever crowed in all his life. Don Quixote himself had not a more solemn countenance.

The set was hardly over before a gentleman, all smiles and laughter, came to ask her to dance. As he chassed, and hopped, and skipped, he laughed without ceasing. At last he said:

"So you haven't noticed it."

"Noticed what?" she asked.

"Why, that I haven't any head; I thought it was very perceptible."

"Haven't any head!" she repeated.

"Certainly; don't you know that my head was shot off by a cannon ball? And yet I can go about and laugh and talk as usual. Isn't it strange?"

"Very," she answered.

"Yes; and I eat too; I never could understand how it was done; but the doctors say I am all right, and am the wonder of the nineteenth century."

"It is very strange," said Ethel, not knowing what else to say.

Here there was a slight commotion near the door.

"What is the matter?" asked her partner of a gentleman in another set, who at other times was a polar bear.

"They are bringing in Rollins," he answered.

"No! 'Tis not possible!"

"Yes; they have taken off his straight jacket on his promise of good behaviour, and let him come to the ball."

"Well, it is risky; I think him decidedly dangerous. Where is his wife?"

"Yonder," said the polar bear. "I asked her to dance, being sorry for the poor thing sitting up there, but she hissed like any cat, and said she'd dance with no lunatic."

"Goodness! The idea!" laughed the headless gentleman.

"I left her spitting with the Queen of Sheba who she called an old fool. Yonder he comes!" cried the polar bear.

"Look! Look!" cried the headless gentleman to Ethel. "Make way for the royal Bengal tiger!" he yelled.

"Silence!" cried Dr. Felder. "Who was that?"

The headless man stooped and picked up Ethel's rose-bud and smelled it as if he had never opened his mouth.

The crowd parted, and through it strode a tall man with a keeper on either side. His long grizzled hair fell on his shoulders; his sunken black eyes rolled fiercely from side to side, the matted beard parted upon his lips as he muttered to himself, "Where is she? Where is she?"

Ethel started aghast — Great Heaven! — it was her father!

"Where is she? Where is she?"

he kept on repeating. "I know he lied—the black-hearted dog!"

Just there he chanced to halt before the tall, dark-eyed lady, who took the remark to herself and was infuriated.

"Whom do you refer to?" she asked.

Before he could answer, Ethel broke from her partner, made her way through the crowd and caught his arm.

"Father!"

He started and turned round.

"My child! My Ethel!"

"Oh, papa! papa!" she cried, and hung to his breast.

Dorset's chest heaved with a mighty sob.

"So it is really true that you are here in this hell-hole! I hoped he lied."

"Who?"

"Jeffreys. He came to me and offered to set us both free if I would consent, or rather, make you marry him. He! that scoundrel! — I choked the breath out of his body and kicked him out of the window. I only wish I had killed him! Curse him!"

"Come, come," said the keeper. "None of that!"

"I'll say what I choose," said Dorset, angrily, "and just as long as I choose. Curse him! D—— him! May Satan catch him and sink him to per——"

"Is that the language of a good Christian?" asked the Queen of Sheba.

"No," said Dorset, "it is not. But it is the language of an injured man. I'm not mealy mouthed. I

make no pretensions to being a Christian."

"You may well acknowledge it, nor to be even a gentleman, swearing in the presence of ladies," said the dark-eyed lady.

"Oh, of course, you had to put in your oar," said Dorset, rudely. "You couldn't rest without saying something."

Then, as she drew herself haughtily up, he continued with a derisive grin, "Well, Mrs. Rollins, how do you find yourself?"

"You should not speak so rudely to your wife, Mr. Rollins," said the keeper.

"Wife!" roared Dorset, "she is no wife of mine. I've told you so a thousand times."

"And I am thankful to say this ruffian is not my husband," cried the lady, incensed in her turn. "How often have I forbidden you, sir, addressing me by that name? I am Mrs. Marlow, and I wish you to remember that."

"Mrs. Marlow!" cried Ethel, "Mrs. Marlow!" she looked upon her in wonder. "Then Alex did not——"

But Mrs. Marlow interrupted her. "Don't gaze your eyes out, child," she said, irritably. "Is it anything wonderful that I should be Mrs. Marlow?"

"Come away from here, Ethel, she shan't browbeat you," said Dorset, angrily. "A perfect old cat, spitting at every one."

"Your language is insufferable! But what else could be expected from

a low creature—a brute—a low vulgarian—a brute beast," cried Mrs. Marlow, beside herself with anger.

"Hold! madam, I won't stand such language," roared Dorset fiercely.

"Come, come, this is dreadful in man and wife," said the keeper, trying to make the peace.

"D—— it! This cat is not my wife!" shouted Dorset.

"That vile wretch is not my husband!" cried Mrs. Marlow at the same time.

"Wretch!"

"Cat!"

They cried simultaneously, repeating each other's words. They were both beside themselves with anger.

Dorset swore; Mrs. Marlow screamed. Both had ungovernable tempers and they put no constraint on them. The lunatics, delighted, gathered around. The attendants ordered the two combatants from the room, and on their refusing to budge, tried to force them to leave.

By this time Dorset was wild with rage, and fought like a tiger. It took three able-bodied keepers to drag him off; cursing, swearing, foaming at the mouth, he was borne away and clapped into a straight jacket. "The very worst man in this asylum, and so artful and cunning! Satan himself is not more so," cried the breathless keepers, when they had subdued him.

Mrs. Marlow was not so bad; but the lady vanished in the angry woman. She refused to obey her attendant, and when the woman tried

to compel her, she slapped her well and good. She was borne from the room, struggling, screaming with impotent rage, and locked up in a padded cell to cool down.

These dreadful outbreaks had a fearful effect upon the lunatics; each was immediately seized with his or her mania; they yelled, they whooped, they barked, they crowed, and Bedlam burst loose.

The rooster gentleman clapped his wings and leaped up and down crowing with joy. "I'm the cock of the walk!" cried he, "Coocoo! Coocoo! I'm the cock that crowed in the morn to wake the priest all shaven and shorn!"

"Hush your foolish folly?" cried Queen Victoria. "You are not a rooster."

"Am I not?" cried the cock. "Look out for my spurs then!" and he gave her a backhanded kick.

Queen Victoria screamed and toppled over.

"Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!" quoted the rooster.

"Help!" screamed the headless gentleman. "Help! who has stolen my head? Ah, wretch! here it is, fastened on to you!" and he seized the pate of the Queen of Sheba and tried to pull it off, and would have killed her had not the attendants flown to the rescue.

As Dorset was dragged away, leaving Ethel entreating and weeping, Mr. Vincent rushed up to her.

"Come away! Come away!" said he; "this is no place for you."

He put his arm about her and

forced his way through the yelling, screaming, capering crowd.

"Come, come," cried he, "now is our opportunity to escape—to fly from this vile prison. Come, my sweet one, my bride, come away."

"No, no!" cried Ethel, affrighted, and struggling to free herself.

He now penned her up in a corner. "Promise to be my wife," said he. "Promise me."

"No, I can't. Let me go," she cried.

But he grasped her all the tighter. "Not till you promise," and his grip became painful.

"Help! Help!" screamed Ethel, terrified.

"Here I come!" roared the polar bear, "fresh from the polar regions," and as he spoke, he seized the couple in his arms and squeezed them tight. He was a powerful creature, and Ethel felt as if her bones were being crushed.

"Polly! Polly!" she screamed. "Polly, come to me!"

"Where are you, deary?" cried the faithful nurse, hurrying through the crowd, and parting them right and left to see her struggling in the grip of two lunatics.

"Let go of her!" cried Polly to the polar bear.

"I am the great polar bear," responded that gentleman.

"I don't care what you are; 'tain't your business to squeeze Miss Doyle. Let go of her, I say," as the bear continued his grip. "or I'll have you put in a straight jacket."

This threat had its effect, and the

polar bear loosed his grip, and Polly attacked the other.

"Mr. Vincent, I'm astonished at you!"

"She shall be my bride!" cried he. "She shall, or I'll kill her!" and he showed a sharp, glittering pocket-knife.

"But she can't marry you here in a corner like she was shamed," said Polly, tranquilly. "Let her go, and let me lead her to the middle of the floor, and you and Mr. Polar Bear follow together. Let him be your best man."

She continued to talk thus till she met a keeper. "Look after those two," she whispered, "they're dangerous."

Soon the two were snatched up, and Polly and her charge vanished. It was some time before the doctors and keepers were able to quell the riot and restore order among their demented patients.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE next morning Ethel prayed and entreated to be allowed to see her father, but was absolutely refused.

"How can you be so unkind?" she said to Polly, as the tears trickled down her cheeks. "I thought you liked me."

"So I do, my deary; far too much to trust you with that violent mad-

man." And Ethel overheard her say to the housekeeper:

"I declare, Mrs. Maxey, I feel discouraged, ma'am; the child seems so straight until you touch on her name, and then she's off like a flash—till she even wants to claim that old lunatic Rollins! because he says his name is Dorset."

"Well, isn't it strange they should both pitch on the same fancy name?" said the matron.

"It does look sorter curus," admitted Polly.

"Does she claim Mrs. Rollins as her mother?"

"No, she hasn't spoke of her; she's took up with the old fellow, and she fairly flew at him last night. And he raved when he saw her. That was the first disturbance."

"I'll mention it to the doctor for him to look into next week when all this excitement quiets down," said the matron. "Then we'll get at the true inwardness of the whole subject."

Mrs. Maxey went on her rounds among the patients, and Polly returned to Ethel.

"Polly," said the girl, suddenly, "may I go and see Mrs. Rollins?"

"Do you know her?" asked Polly.

"No, but I'd like to."

"What did she call herself?" asked the nurse.

"Mrs. Marlow," answered the girl. "I expect she is Alex's mother. I know he was going somewhere to an asylum to find his mother, but I suppose from this that he couldn't have done so. It was his going that gave

Jeffreys the opportunity to steal me."

Polly was staggered; she talked so straightforward. "If she is telling the truth," thought the nurse, "they have shut her up for some bad reason!"

"May I go, dear Polly, and see Mrs. Rollins?" said the girl.

"Certainly," said Polly, "after she comes out of the padded cell. But I will tell you at once she's a dangerous lunatic."

"I'm not afraid," said Ethel. "And when can I see papa?"

"Never," said Polly. "Do you want him to strangle you like Mr. Vincent and Polar Bear done you last night?"

"No," cried Ethel, "but he is not crazy like them."

"If he isn't you are," muttered the nurse, and was deaf to her entreaties.

By Saturday the asylum had quieted down, all save the two raving lunatics as the doctors and keepers called Mr. and Mrs. Rollins. Mrs. Rollins was still fuming and fretting though she had been removed from the padded cell to her own room. And Rollins, though still cursing and swearing, was relieved of the straight jacket, but was shut up in his own cell, which was securely barred and was in the extreme outer corner of the topmost floor of the male wing.

Unable to see him, afraid to venture out on account of the polar bear and Mr. Vincent, Ethel took refuge in the matron's parlour and tried to soothe her troubled mind with music.

She opened the little parlour organ and began to sing:

"Oh, had I the wings of a dove!"

She remembered Marlow's sympathy when she sung it before, and was ready to weep. "Oh, where was that trusted friend now, when she needed him so much? Why did he not come to her?"

Attracted by the music, the lunatics crowded about the parlour and were anxious to come in.

"Oh, no; oh, no;" cried Ethel, shivering. "Please, Polly, let me be alone."

"They are beset to come in," said Polly. "You charms 'em like a bird does snakes."

"Then," said Ethel, half laughing, "let me fly. Let me go and see Mrs. Marlow—Rollins, I mean."

"Very well," said Polly, and led the way to a room on the next floor, above the one that Ethel occupied. Polly tapped and entered without further ceremony.

"Mrs. Rollins," said the nurse, "here's a young lady who wants to make your acquaintance," and she ushered Ethel in.

"Well, I don't want to make hers," said Mrs. Marlow, irritably. The poor woman's nerves were on the rack from all she had gone through.

"Well, Mrs. Rollins," said Polly, "I wouldn't talk that way."

"I forbid you to call me by that name; it is not mine."

"Leave her with me a little while, Polly," Ethel whispered, and Polly departed.

"Mrs. Marlow," said the girl, gently.

The poor woman started.

"I wanted to come and see you, and find out if you were really Alex Marlow's mother."

"Alex Marlow! And what do you know of him?"

"A great deal. He is my best friend, and has been so good and kind to me in all my trouble. Ever since my dear father disappeared he took me in his care.

"Took you in his care?" Mrs. Marlow repeated, wondering if the girl spoke the truth, or was raving. "Took you in his care! And pray who are you?"

"Ethel Dorset, Thomas Dorset's daughter."

"Thomas Dorset's daughter! And what are you doing in my room?"

"I want to tell you how much——"

"You shall tell me nothing. I wish to hear nothing from any of that wretch's family. I have suffered enough from them. Leave my room."

"Only let me tell you that Al——"

"Don't mention his name. Be-gone!"

"But——"

"Go!"

She advanced with a menacing gesture, drove her out, and slammed the door. A giggle greeted Ethel's ejection.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Queen Victoria. "So my Lady Disdain has cut you! Oh! she's high strung! She's a Tartar! a vixen!"

Feeling utterly cast down, Ethel

retreated to her room, and wept bitterly.

By noon, Mr. Vincent had another qualm of conscience for his treatment of his Dulcinea, and wrote her a note of apology.

"Oh, peerless and beautiful one! Oh, pure ice!—cold as pure, and pure as cold—Oh, divine one, pardon my late extravaganzas; I was frantic! But I am cut to the soul, for Polly tells me you are sorely hurt by the fury of my attachment. Oh, my innamorata! my Dulcinea, my divinity! It would not have happened but for that infernal polar bear, for my touch was as light as the eider down of his cold region, when he must needs lay hold of us with the grip of death—the squeezing together of the joints and marrow. I myself am black and blue from his grip, and what must it be with you! Oh, loved one, tell me that you are not fatally injured, and that you forgive me. Only one line to ease my torment!

"Your despairing lover,

"PERCY VINCENT."

Polly brought this missive, giggling. "That Mr. Vincent beats anything," she said. "Ain't he a crazy lune?"

"I wish he'd keep away," said Ethel, impatiently. "I never wish to see him again—Oh! I loathe this place! Polly, when will Alex come?"

"Very soon," said Polly, looking at her sorrowfully. "Come, send Mr. Vincent his answer."

"Tell him, please, to go away," said Ethel.

"Write it, then," said Polly, "for he won't believe me."

Polly loaned her a pencil, and tearing off the back of his note, she wrote:

"I forgive you, but please don't trouble me any more."

"ETHEL D——"

And handed it to Polly, who took it away giggling.

"Lord!" soliloquized the nurse, "what droll things lunatics are! Crazy and sensible the same time."

Mr. Vincent read the note in a transport of despair. "How cold! Like a lump of ice! A ball of snow!"

"Well, she ought to be cold," said Polly, "she's married."

"Married? I don't believe you!"

"Yonder goes her husband now. Come to see after her."

"That's the man that Rollins threw out of his window."

"Certainly. He fetched him here, and he hates him according. You see insanity runs in the family, as he finds to his cost."

"I see," said Mr. Vincent. "'Tis very sad! Poor creature! But, Polly," said he, suddenly, "wasn't she a fool to care for him rather than me?"

"No accounting for tastes," said Polly, "but I'd let her alone after that note."

"So I will," said Mr. Vincent, in sudden anger, his eyes flashing, "I'll speak to her no more."

"No, I wouldn't demean myself,"

said Polly, and went away, thinking she had done a smart thing.

Not only was Mr. Vincent's love cruelly wounded, but his vanity was piqued. Mr. Vincent was quite vain; he had been petted and spoiled in his prosperous days, and though his mind had failed, the vanity still flourished; indeed, became abnormally great.

The idea that she should prefer that hopping, limping creature to him! She should smart for it! While his mind was in this inflamed state, a mischievous chance threw in his way the Reverend Mr. Smallweed.

Mr. Smallweed had been put in the asylum as a hopeless kleptomaniac. He stole in season and out of season, everything that he could lay his hands on. Things that he didn't want, that he had no use for, just to be stealing. Mr. Vincent now saw him in the corner of the yard, chuckling to himself as gleeful as any magpie.

"I'll bet that fellow has been stealing," thought Mr. Vincent, quick to see another's weakness. "What are you grinning at?" said he.

"Look!" said Mr. Smallweed, chuckling. "See what I've got!" and he displayed a case with matches. "One of the doctors left this on the table in his office, and I slipped in and got it," and he chuckled gleefully.

"What are you going to do with it?" asked Mr. Vincent, contemptuously.

"Do with it?" repeated the other, vacantly, "do with it? Nothing."

"Then, why trouble to take it?"

"I had to," cried the reverend gentleman. "Something says to me,

‘Take! Take!’ and I have to, for peace and quiet sake.”

All at once a bright idea flashed into Mr. Vincent’s head. Revenge was sweet! He would fire the asylum and burn Ethel up! Yes, revenge was sweet! “Give me the matches, my good creature,” said he.

And Mr. Smallweed, having no earthly use for them, handed them up, and started off.

“Stop,” said Mr. Vincent, “where are you going?”

The matches appropriated, and rid of, the mania left Mr. Smallweed and his mind began to right up. “I am going to see Mr. Fellers, the poor man who imagines he is a cock. The other night during that unfortunate affair in the ball-room,” continued the reverend gentleman, looking severely at Mr. Vincent, who winced, “I never did believe in balls, and if the faculty had minded me, as they should, they would abandon the pernicious things.”

“Well?” cried Mr. Vincent, impatiently.

“Mr. Fellers,” continued Mr. Smallweed, returning to the subject in hand, and which he had forgotten, “Mr. Fellers, under the strange delusion that he was a rooster, spurred at Mrs. Goby, who thinks she is Queen Victoria, and kicked her down, and—and the whole room went raving mad, excepting me.” (Mr. Smallweed neglected to mention that he picked everybody’s pocket of their

handkerchiefs, and hid them behind the ball-room door.) “The keepers punished the poor man severely, and he is laid up with his bruises. So I thought I would go and pray with him—drop a word in season—now that his heart is open through the abraded condition of his skin.”

By this time Mr. Vincent had recovered from his embarrassment on account of the reference to the ball-room scene, and, strange to say, he was fully aware of the absurdity of his companion’s conduct, and enjoyed the incongruity greatly. But his thoughts soon returned to his own schemes of vengeance, and the cunning of the lunatic cropped out.

“My dear sir,” said he, laughing, “never mind that old creature. He’s tied up, and can wait awhile. I want a bundle of kindling; can you slip round to the kitchen and get it?”

“Get it yourself,” said Mr. Smallweed shortly.

“I can’t. But you are so expert, you’d slip it away before the cooks’ very noses and they’d never see.”

Mr. Smallweed’s vanity was touched and his cupidity was fired once more. “What shall I do with it,” he asked.

“Hide it behind that tree, and I’ll stand on watch.”

Away went Mr. Smallweed, all on fire for the kindling, and strange to say, managed to steal a lot of it without being detected, and hid it as he was bid.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Now," whispered he to Mr. Vincent, who sat calmly on a rustic seat a little way off. "Now I'll go and see my afflicted friend."

"Don't leave me, my dear Mr. Smallweed," said Mr. Vincent, coaxingly. "I feel so badly; I think if I had a little medicine I'd feel better."

"Let me run for the doctor," said the reverend gentleman.

"Oh, no! he'd be sure to give me some vile drug that would sicken me. I know these doctors; they are fiendish. If I only had a little Spirits of Turpentine it would revive me so much. Run to the drug-store and slip a bottle off the shelf for me, my dear friend."

Mr. Smallweed was flattered. Mr. Vincent had never taken any notice of him before. So away he went, proud to show off his accomplishment, and presently returned with a bottle tucked away in each trowser and handed them to Mr. Vincent.

"Here," said he. "I thought if a little would help you, a good deal would make you well."

"True," said Mr. Vincent, and proceeded to smell the drug and appeared much revived by its perfume.

Away went Mr. Smallweed. No sooner was he out of sight than Mr. Vincent set about hiding his treasures where the reverend gentleman could not find them and steal them again, and then calmly waited for night. In the meantime he

thought over and matured a plan of action displaying a foresight that would have done credit to the sanest mind.

At the table in the convalescent hall where he dined, he abstracted a table knife, thrust it inside his vest, and after dining heartily, sauntered out, whistling a tune. Going to his room, which was in this building and on the first floor, he with the aid of the knife, loosened the screws that held fast the locks to the window sashes and blinds; then he screwed them back to escape detection, but he had so loosened them that a few turns of his knife would remove them whenever he wanted to.

Watching his chance he stole into the building for the female patients, and did the same thing with one of the windows on a cross hall where there was but little passing, and when nobody was by to see. Indeed, he was so sane, that no one would have suspected him of such a thing.

In the dusk of the evening Mr. Vincent sauntered down to the stables and filched thence a lot of straw for horse bedding and hid it out behind a vacant building used in winter to store fuel. Having made all these arrangements, he went back to the convalescent ward and peacefully ate a hearty supper. The thought of being able to outwit the authorities and fire the asylum had now gotten uppermost, almost to the exclusion of his vindictive feelings towards Ethel.

He made himself very pleasant and agreeable at the table, and at nine

o'clock, the hour for retiring, went to his room and was locked in like the rest of the convalescents. But Mr. Vincent did not go to bed, but patiently waited for ten o'clock to strike. At last it tolled from the clock in the tower of the hall; then he prepared for action.

The moon at its full shone with the brightness known only to the September moon. The weather was warm for the time of year; no rain had fallen for several weeks, and everything was as dry as tinder; thus all seemed propitious for the carrying out of Mr. Vincent's plans.

He carefully opened his window, pushed his bed up close to it, tied the sheets together, and one end of this rude rope to the foot of the bed. Then he waited for the half hour to strike. By this time the asylum was wrapped in slumber.

He now tied a chair to the end of his rope and let it down out of the window; afterwards he slid down the rope himself to the ground. Then he untied the lower sheet, and taking it and the chair carried them around to the hall window of the female asylum. Here he also brought his fuel and combustibles, tied them in the sheet, mounted the chair, and forced open the window, and, after throwing in his bundle, managed to scramble in after it.

He now crept noiselessly about, distributing his combustibles with a clear-sighted cunning that was satanic. Two low flights of stairs ran down into the main hall. The building was four stories high, but Mr.

Vincent did not waste any material; he put it all about on the first and second floors near the staircase, where there would be a draught, and in corners of the hall where it would not be noticed.

He then fired his heaps, beginning at the second story, and ignited them all. He leaped out of the window and ran away into the grounds, where he stood watching, laughing and capering with joy.

As the combustibles in the hall ignited, a dense smoke arose, half suffocating the patients in their beds.

The night watch awoke from a sweet nap. Great Heavens! the first floor—the second floor was on fire!

He dashed out of the front door and scurried off to the convalescent hall to awaken the asylum officials.

A strong draught came in at the front door and great fires burst out everywhere. Mighty tongues of flame leaped up and licked in doors and stairways and wood-work everywhere.

Soon the great bell that hung in the tower of the convalescent hall rung out a fire alarm, the keepers and nurses awoke from their sleep, sprang out of their beds, and rushed out into the hall, only to be blinded, choked by a heavy smoke, to see the lurid flames, to hear the sharp crackle of the fire.

Dr. Felder sounded the fire alarm, and soon the sharp ring of the fire bell awoke slumbering Alburn.

The ringing of the great bell roused the maniacs in the padded cells, and

they leaped and jumped and screamed afresh.

The asylum people now turned on their own water works to hold the fire in check till help could come. They fought bravely, but the fire had the upper hand and kept it.

The glare of the fire, the shouting of the asylum people as they fought the flames, the stifling smoke which choked them, drove the more sane patients frantic; they beat upon their doors and clamored to be let out.

"The wing is obliged to go, Dr. Felder!" cried Dr. Parker. "Better get the patients out while we can."

"Turn the patients out," ordered Dr. Felder. "The saner ones first. Keep cool, men. Let every nurse go for his own charge."

The keepers scattered, while still the outside attachés of the asylum plied the hose and strove to keep the fire in check till help could come.

Dr. Felder telegraphed the police: "Asylum in danger. Send out the military."

Then the armory bell clanged out a call to arms, and all Alburn awoke and stirred.

"The asylum on fire! The asylum on fire!"

Marlow, at the hotel, caught the sound as the fire brigade thundered by, shaking the ground as they flew.

"The asylum on fire! The asylum on fire!" yelled the crowd on the street.

CHAPTER XXX.

DAYS passed, and Marlow could hear nothing of Ethel. She seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth. Full of desperation he went to Appler.

"I think," said he, "she has been taken out of town, and it will be a long and tedious search to find her. What about your mother?"

Marlow hung his head. "This trouble about Ethel has quite upset me," he said at last, "and—and—"

"Put it out of your mind," said the detective. "That's the way; sweethearts and wives first and parents afterwards! And it's been so from the beginning of the world, I judge, for the Scripture says, 'For this reason shall a man leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife.'

"In your place, I think I'd go and settle that matter up, and then, with an unoccupied mind, turn to the hunt for the young lady. For aught you know, her father has a hand in that business, and perhaps liberating your mother may help to clear it up. It seems very much like a wheel within a wheel."

"I believe I will take your advice," said Marlow. "I'm so upset I can't think."

"You have been badly treated," said the detective. "But you have acquitted yourself like a man."

"Very well," said the other. "Patrick died that very day you saw him, but here are Dr. Phelps, and my affidavits. I got them as soon as I

received your telegram, but this other business knocked them out of my head. But if Patrick is dead, Mr. Perkins could throw some light on this business, and we will go and ferret it out."

To this Marlow agreed, and they called at once. But it required some persuasion on Marlow's part before they were allowed to see him. Mr. Perkins, the servant said, had been extremely ill, and was only now slowly convalescing. It was only Marlow's statement that he was an old friend, and the servant remembering to have seen him there, both before and after Edgar's death, that caused the man to admit him.

Mr. Perkins sat in his library propped up in his easy chair, a wasted shadow of his former self; his eyes were sunk deep in his head; his cheeks were hollow, and the skin clung to the bone; his hands, which looked like the claws of some bird, clutched the arms of the chair.

Marlow was shocked at his appearance, and his angry suspicions died out in a sort of horror. "How do you do, Mr. Perkins?" he asked.

Mr. Perkins looked at him vaguely.

"Don't you know me? Alex Marlow."

"Marlow!" cried the sick man, and shook all over. "My son is dead! Mr. Marlow," he wailed, "my sin has found me out! My sin has found me out!"

"Mr. Perkins," said Appler, as Marlow stood mute, shocked at the change in him. "Mr. Perkins, do you remember a man named Patrick

O'Connor, Mrs. Marlow's coachman?"

Mr. Perkins sank back in his chair, uttering a faint cry of terror.

"Stop, stop," said the nurse, "let him be. You must not excite him. You must go now."

"That is impossible," said Appler. "This man is under suspicion of a great crime, and we must sift the matter while we may."

"And who are you?" asked the nurse, astonished at his tone.

"I am a detective sent on this business."

"My sin has found me out!" wailed the sick man. "My sin has found me out!"

"Calm yourself, Mr. Perkins," said Appler, soothingly, "and tell me what you know about Patrick."

"My sin has found me out!" cried he, shuddering.

"You must not trouble him!" interposed the nurse.

"Then tell me what you know about Mrs. Marlow. Where is she?"

"My sin! My sin!" he screamed, "has found me out, and my boy is dead!" and he fell back in a shuddering fit, his eyes rolling in their hollow sockets, and his mouth foaming.

"You shall *not* torture him any longer," cried the nurse.

"Come, come, Appler," said Marlow, shuddering at the frightful sight. "Come away; he can tell nothing."

"He *is* guilty!" cried Appler.

"True; but a greater than we has taken him in hand."

And they hurried from the dreary house.

"Now, Appler, let us hasten to Alburn. I wish you to come with me. I'm so upset I can't think," said Marlow.

They took the next train for Alburn, and reached there after sunset, but too late to do anything.

"To-morrow," said Appler, "we'll settle up this business, and I'll search that asylum from top to bottom."

"Appler! Wake! Wake!" cried Marlow, springing up and throwing on his clothes, he dashed out on the street and joined the hurrying crowd.

"The asylum on fire! The asylum on fire!" cried the crowd, as huge columns of smoke arose in the distance.

Outstripping many, Marlow rushed to the head of the hurrying column. "Oh! Mother! Mother! Mother!" he groaned, as he fled along.

In the asylum all was wild commotion as the nurses unlocked the doors and bade the more sane patients come out; and out they poured, undressed, some wild with terror and shrieking; some weak from fright and tottering and falling, but for the nurses; some frantic and wild and refusing to go, save as the nurses dragged them or drove them with blows.

Roused by the alarm bell, Polly had leaped up, and calling on Ethel to follow her, had rushed out into the stifling, blinding smoke.

"Get out your patients," shouted a nurse who passed her. "Get out your patients! The staircase is on fire. No time to waste."

Away went Polly with Ethel at her heels.

"Keep close to me," she ordered.

She collected her charges, and hauled and pulled and drove them before her to the stairs. Ethel had hold of an old lady whose aged legs could hardly support her as she tottered on.

"How about the off wing?" cried Polly, referring to the Bedlamites.

"They's kept for the last; couldn't do anything with them in this crowd."

"Now," cried Dr. Parker, emerging from the staircase, gasping and panting, "are all of the upper floor here?"

"Coming down now, sir."

"Where's Mrs. Rollins?"

"Mrs. Rollins!" cried her nurse, who was dragging a biting, kicking lunatic, frantic with fright, "I clean forgot her!"

"One of you go back," said the doctor. "Hurry now, while I superintend the bedlamites."

"I can't," said the nurse.

"Nor I, neither," said Polly, grabbing a fleeing patient. "Come back here."

"Polly, I'll go. Give me the key," said Ethel.

"Make haste, deary, and join us afore the bedlamites come," said Polly, as the nurse gave her the key. "Remember it is right over your room."

Away darted Ethel up the stairs, through the blinding smoke, toward the corner room; the key turned in the lock, and she dashed in.

"Mrs. Marlow! Mrs. Marlow!" she gasped. "Come! Come!"

But Mrs. Marlow was frantic with fright. She turned round and round like a crazy creature.

"Come! Come!" the girl repeated, "before the staircase catches, or the bedlamites come down. They are turning them loose now."

"Great God!" cried Mrs. Marlow, wildly, "I can't face them! Oh! what shall I do? Oh! what shall I do?"

"Come! Come! It will be too late!"

"It is too late!" cried a mocking voice, and the key turned. Queen Victoria was hurrying by, and the fiend of murder seized her.

Ethel flew to the door. "Oh! my God!" she moaned. "We are locked in! We are lost."

She went to the window and tried to force it open. The blinds parted; below was a vast sea of heads, lit up by the fierce glare of the flames.

"Help! Help!" she cried, half throwing herself from the window.

Polly, now carrying out her charge, spied her. "Oh! my deary! my deary!" she screamed.

Jeffreys who was standing in the crowd, pale and breathless, saw her; he ran toward the nurse. "My wife! My wife!" he yelled, half frantic.

But Mrs. Marlow seized Ethel and jerked her back, and thrust herself out.

"Help! Help!" she screamed.

"Look! Look!" yelled the crowd,

pointing to where the pale woman stood.

Marlow, who stood panting in the crowd, looked up and recognised—his mother! The next moment he rushed into the house where the firemen stood fighting the fire, striving to keep it in check, till the bedlamites could be dragged out.

Above the hoarse roar of the crowd, above the crackling of the fire and the hiss of the water as it fell, above all these noises rose the awful yells and whoops of the demoniacs as their keepers jerked open their cell doors and turned them loose.

They now came down the cross hall on which their cells stood, into the upper hall and down the winding staircase; their fierce cries rent the air. For pure joy of being free, they would have cast themselves into the flames, had not their keepers driven them forward with blows and curses.

Down the staircase they trooped, a wild, unkempt set, half naked, looking more like furies and fiends than human beings. At sight of the firemen with hose in their hands, the head of the column fell on them with exultant yells, their hats were knocked from their heads, the hose jerked from their hands. To the right hand, to the left, they were knocked and slapped, the fierce bedlamites hitting, biting, scratching.

At this onslaught the firemen, who constantly faced death and danger, fled in terror, many of them leaving their hats in the hands of the maniacs. Blinded by the smoke, scorched and blistered by the heat

the keepers drove the demented rioters before them; forward and out into the night they went, screaming, screeching, howling, the crowd receding before them with an instinctive horror.

Through this living lane the demented ran, followed by their keepers, till safe out in the park, they leaped and howled and wallowed on the grass.

As the demented went forth, the firemen seized their hose and played again upon the fire, which now threatened to get the better of them and leave nothing but the bare walls.

Marlow now rushed in and ran toward the stairway.

"Stop!" roared a man. "It is as much as your life is worth."

"My mother is up there," cried Marlow, "and I must rescue her or—"

"Play on the staircase," shouted the chief. "If he will go, give him a chance."

"It's on the fourth floor, corner room," shouted a keeper, as Marlow rushed by, his clothes wet, his hat pulled well down over his eyes.

The water played about him as he dashed up, and up, and up the winding steps through scorching heat and blinding smoke. The men threw the water high, trying to follow him, and keep the fire under that he had to rush through; up, and up and up, he went.

The crowd on the outside became frantic as the lady held her hands out and begged for help—for life.

"He's coming! He's coming!" they yelled.

But how was he to get down? for from the walls below the fire leaped in long tongues licking out as if in search of food.

Within, Marlow, blinded by the smoke, staggered to and fro like a drunken man. On reaching the fourth floor he started down the corridor, trying every door till he reached the corner one that was locked and the key gone. Putting his shoulder to it he forced it open, and through the thick smoke he saw two white figures.

"Mother!" he called, hoarsely, "Mother!"

Mrs. Marlow turned from the window, and the crowd, thinking he had reached her, set up a wild cheer.

But while she turned, a slight figure in white recognised the visitor for whom she had been longing, and threw her arms about him.

"Alex!" she cried. "Alex! have you come?"

"Ethel! Is this really you?" He held her fast; he strained her close for one instant; the next his mother reached him.

"Who is it?"

"Mother! Don't you know me?"

"My son! My dear son!" Her arms were about him.

"Now!" cried Marlow. "Come! we have no time to lose. The staircase is already in flames."

He hurried them to the corridor as he spoke. The next instant, with a mighty crash, the staircase fell in on the first floor, while the flames came travelling up to the second story.

A cry rose up from the surging crowd. "Cut off! Cut off! The staircase has fallen!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

MARLOW groaned, and his mother uttered a piercing scream. He rushed back into the room, and thrust his head out of the window.

"A ladder! A ladder!" he shouted.

Hundreds of voices replied in one confused shout, pointing all the time to the window.

Looking down he saw that the flames were pouring out of the windows of the second story, darting upward like a thousand writhing serpents, so that no ladder could rest upon the wall.

Then a man sprang out of the crowd, and making a trumpet of his hand, shouted, "Go up the attic stairs! Get through the skylight on to the roof!"

Marlow hurried back to the corridor; the smoke was pouring into it, thick, and dense, and suffocating. Seizing a chair he smashed the window-sash in the hall to allow the smoke to pass out. As it escaped, a flood of light passed in, and by its aid he found his way back to the stairs.

"Come this way," he said, and hurried his companions up to the attic.

The fire-escape was at the head of the stairway, else he would never have found it. Pushing it open, he lifted

Ethel up, so that she could climb through.

The girl was light and active, and in a second stood erect upon the roof, and at the sight the mighty crowd below shouted aloud.

"Now, Ethel," called the matter-of-fact lover, "give mother a helping hand." He lifted her up, and by dint of pulling and pushing Mrs. Marlow got on the roof.

Then Marlow clambered out, and as he stood erect with an arm about each, such a shout went up as made the welkin ring.

"My deary! My deary!" screamed Polly. "It is she! It is she!"

"The brave fellow!"

"That's his mother that he risked his life for!"

"One of the poor lunatics left behind!"

"See how tenderly he holds her!"

"And the other?"

Only three in the crowd recognised her: Polly, weeping for joy; Jeffreys, his terror turned to rage at sight of her with Marlow; and Mr. Vincent, who, enraged that his scheme should fail, began to plot how he could remedy it.

With his arm about his mother, and Ethel's hands locked fast in his, Marlow looked about him. As far as the eye could see, nothing but a sea of heads—of upturned faces.

The roof was almost flat, and the slates were not yet heated. Guiding his companions he walked slowly towards the edge nearest the convalescent building and waited.

How helpssss he felt with nothing to do but wait!

His two companions clung to him trembling, his mother weeping.

"And have you found me but to die?" she sobbed—"and such a death?"

"If die we must, we die together," he answered, gently.

But though he spoke to his mother, his eyes rested on Ethel, and he drew the trembling girl closer to him.

"My darling!" he whispered. "This thought robs death of its terrors, its——"

The mighty roar below broke again into a shout, and Marlow, looking up from Ethel's pale, quivering face, saw that the firemen were hauling their ladders up to the roof of the convalescent building.

"Courage!" he said, "they are fixing to help us."

"Thank God!" cried Mrs. Marlow.

Regarding the wing as hopeless, the firemen were bending every energy to save the convalescent building, and their engines played on it without ceasing. But at the same time they were bending every nerve to rescue the three prisoners on the doomed building. And now, after hauling their ladders up to the roof of the convalescent hall, they proceeded to lash them together to try and bridge the chasm between the two buildings. It was a difficult job.

Marlow watched them as, after making their bridge they slowly pushed it along. The frailness of the ladders, and the greatness of the distance caused the flimsy struc-

ture to bend clear down to the third story.

"Pull it back and tie a rope to it," ordered the chief, and the men obeyed.

The crowd below began to mutter at the delay. The fire burned hotter and hotter, higher and higher. The smoke burst from the windows on the top floor and swept like a black banner over the heads of the devoted three—the doomed three!

The crowd began to threaten.

By this time a small rope or cord was tied to the end of the ladder, and the rest rolled up, in a compact ball.

"Now, then!" shouted a fireman to Marlow, showing the ball, "catch this!"

Marlow instantly loosened his companions' grasp of him, and stood ready as the other threw the ball, which he caught, and began to pull and guide the ladder as the firemen pushed it. At last it reached the roof of the burning building, and was seized and safely pulled upon it.

"Now, then!" roared the chief through his trumpet, "can you walk it?"

"Walk that flimsy, swaying thing!" Marlow shook his head.

"It is your only chance for life!"

The young man tried the ladder with his foot. Yes; it seemed firm. He then threw off his coat and vest, and removed his shoes.

As he did so an awful struggle raged within him. Only one could he take with him!

"Which one?"

If he lived to come back would she be there? For the roof was heating

and crackling and soon would crush in. There was no time for parleying. What should he do?

He rose; and though he stood in a burning heat, a cold sweat broke over him.

"I can take but one"—he began; he looked first at one and then the other, and his eyes then rested on Ethel.

She grew deadly pale, but she forced herself to speak.

"Take your mother—and come back for me."

"I will if only to die," he muttered, hoarsely,

He stooped and lifted his mother in his arms. She was shaking like an aspen.

"Put your arms around my neck. Rest your head on my shoulder so! close your eyes, mother. Now stay perfectly still. Remember, if you jerk or move, you lose us both."

She meekly obeyed.

"My son! my dear son!" she murmured, as she felt his strong arms about her.

"My mother! my dear mother!"

He straightened himself under his burden and with head erect, strode out upon the flimsy bridge that trembled under their weight. Round after round he slowly stepped.

The crowd below watched in painful silence. Every step he took seemed to beat upon their heads—their brains. One miss step and they would both be hurled below, a crushed and mangled mass. An awful breathless silence fell on all.

Step after step, slowly, mechani-

cally, the man on the ladder went, bearing his motionless burden. The crowd below drew their breath in quivering sobs.

Could he hold out? could he hold out? they wondered as the ladder swayed beneath him.

Like one walking in a dream, Marlow went on. He could not see the rounds and it was well that he could not, else his head might turn, perched thus in mid-air. He had gauged at first the distance and he now mechanically stepped it off.

Well did the athlete's gymnastic training serve him now in the ease with which he bore his burden, his well strung nerves, his coolness, his determination, that nothing should upset him. Slowly, carefully he strode on.

The crowd below watched with their nerves on the stretch.

Oh, would he never get over! Must this strain on them last forever? They moaned and sobbed in their agony.

Onward, onward, onward strode the man upon the swaying ladder. Onward, onward, onward.

At last he nears the end! He has reached it! Thank God! Thank God! Thank God!

The crowd drew a long shivering sob of relief and many wept. Then, as the young man set his burden down, a mighty shout went up, a shout to which all others had been as nothing. A shout that rose and sank again. A mighty wave of sound from that tumultuous human sea.

Indifferent to the tumult, indeed he hardly heard it, Marlow laid his

half-unconscious burden in the arms of a fireman, and retraced his steps.

But safe from danger, Mrs. Marlow rallied. She struggled to free herself from the grasp of the man who held her, and shrieked after her son :

“Come back, Alex! Come back! Why risk your precious life for a stranger?—for your enemy’s daughter! Let a fireman do it. Come back! Come back!

Heedless of her cries, Marlow started on his perilous journey.

Frantic at the sight of his danger, unable to free herself from the grasp that held her, Mrs. Marlow sank on her knees and with outstretched hands sent up wail after wail : “Come back my son! Come back!”

Deaf to her entreaties Marlow hurried on. His enemy’s daughter! All that made life worth living to him.

It was far harder walking now that he could see the dangers that beset him. One false step, one slip on the rounds, and he would be dashed to pieces below. He must not think of it or his head would swim.

He fixed his eyes on the girl waiting breathlessly for him on the other side. Waiting, trembling with terror for him, half weeping with horror, half smiling to cheer, stretching out her slender hands as if to help him, Ethel stood upon the roof. Marlow had crossed half way, the ladder swayed and shook beneath him, his head began to turn.

Just then through the open trap-door huge volumes of smoke, huge volumes of flame leaped forth. The

hot slates crackled and the roof began to give way. Maddened at the sight Marlow forgot his own danger and ran over the flimsy bridge, indifferent to its swaying, seized Ethel in his arms and turned to fly.

Again the trembling ladder shook under their double weight, but this time the man that travelled it walked fast and firm. Forgotten was the danger of the bridge in the greater danger that beset him to cross before the roof gave way and shook the ladder from its support.

Feeling their danger, feeling her helplessness and how much depended on her lover’s strength, Ethel, as she clung to him, her arms about him, her head upon his shoulders, pressed her lips again and again to his neck in a childish, helpless fashion. “Courage! courage!” it seemed to say. “Courage, for I love you; don’t let me die!” the mute caress pleaded, and Marlow thrilled under the touch, and he strained her closer to him.

Again the crowd below hung on the rack, for the roof was crackling, crackling, crackling, preparatory to the crash. Could he cross before it came? The tremendous heat ignited the ladder—Oh God! would it reach him? Would it break under him before he reached the other side?

With their nerves drawn to the utmost tension, moaning as if in pain, the crowd stood waiting.

Afraid to play upon the fire that pursued him, the firemen stood hose in hand waiting.

All at once the awful stillness was broken by the sharp hiss of the water

as it struck the pursuing flames. The moaning of the crowd broke into a cheer and Marlow stepped from the shaking ladder and set his burden down upon the roof.

Again the cheering seemed to make the earth quiver, in that universal homage that the world pays to bravery and devotion. In the frantic joy at the escape of three people of whom they knew nothing, the crowd went mad; they clapped their hands until they ached, they shook one another's hands; they embraced each other; they went wild.

The fire had been quickly extinguished on the ladder and it was pulled back and now hung along the side of the convalescent hall for the three late prisoners to descend. A fireman lifted Mrs. Marlow and bore her down, Marlow following with Ethel. He had given his mother precedence when death threatened them, but he could not bear that any man but himself should touch Ethel.

He did not stop to reason, it was an instinctive jealousy that made him hold her fast. But safe upon the ground he released Ethel and caught his mother in his arms.

"My mother! my mother! found at last!" And Mrs. Marlow's budding jealousy vanished in that fond embrace.

The sympathetic crowd wept and embraced each other for them. And Marlow would have been half killed with kindness; his hands shaken off; his breath squeezed out of him by hearty hugs and slaps on the back, had not Appler and some of the

asylum authorities come to the rescue, and had not a new excitement diverted popular attention, for the cry arose:

"The left wing is on fire!"

Mr. Vincent's joy at the destruction of the right wing had been greatly marred by Marlow's efforts to rescue Ethel. "If the firemen continue to play on the fire," reasoned Mr. Vincent, "he may succeed. I'm determined he shan't. I'll set the other wing on fire and so take off their attention."

It did not take him long in the wild commotion that prevailed to carry out this design. The same tactics that succeeded before succeeded again. The keepers had taken out all the harmless male patients and only the violent ones were left. Hoping that the left wing would escape, they waited till the last moment to remove them. So Mr. Vincent had the building pretty much to himself, and succeeded in building up a roaring fire on each flight of stairs and along the corridors by the help of a can of kerosene oil which he stole from the housekeeper's pantry, which had been left open in the confusion.

Absorbed in endeavouring to suppress the fire in the right wing and keep the convalescent hall from catching, no notice was taken of the lunatic till volumes of smoke were seen pouring from the building.

Jeffreys was the first to give the alarm. He could not bear the sight of Ethel in Marlow's arms, and, with curses, had turned away. Neither did he wish Marlow to recognize him,

so he had moved to the edge of the crowd and thus chanced to be the first to spy the fire and raised the alarm.

Mr. Vincent, who just then came flitting round the house delighted with his success, heard him with anger. "Intermeddling fool! What business was it of his? But he'd pay him back! Why, it was Ethel's husband! He should die! and then she would be free to marry him! if the fire king (Marlow) rescued her." He stood watching his chance while Jeffreys continued to shout: "The left wing is on fire! The left wing is on fire!"

Here the roof of the right wing went in with a crash that made the rescued party shudder at what they had escaped!

"And all through you?" murmured Ethel, clinging to Marlow's hand.

Marlow shuddered. "I cannot bear to think of it!" he said.

Seeing the folly of wasting any more time on the right wing, the firemen turned their attention to the left, while they still played on the convalescent hall. But in the wing the fire was inside and hard to get at. The doctors and keepers dashed in to rescue the bedlamites. At sight of burning stairs the keepers swore loudly.

"This is the work of an incendiary!" they cried.

Up the burning stairs they flew, while the firemen played upon them through the blinding smoke; up the corridors to the end of the building

where the bedlamites were confined. Their yells and curses could be heard as they flattened their faces against the iron bars of their cell windows.

"A man takes his life in his hands here," the keepers muttered, as they burst open door after door and turned the inmates out.

As they did so pandemonium seemed to have burst loose. The blinding, stifling smoke; the raging, roaring flames, throwing a hideous glare; the hissing of the water; the cries of the firemen, and the curses of the keepers, and, worse than all, the yells of the demoniacs as they were turned loose, made the burning asylum seem the entrance to the Inferno.

The demoniacs leaped upon their keepers and were driven off with clubs. They leaped upon each other, and with difficulty were torn apart and driven towards the burning staircase.

Some were terrified at the sight and fled back to their cells to perish there. Some seized each other and hurled themselves into the flames to be burned and maimed. Some assaulted their keepers and with blows and curses were driven by them, yelling and screaming, screeching through the flames down one stairway after another till they reached the main hall where they scattered the firemen. Then on, out of doors, where they scattered the crowd, on, on into the park where the blinded, bruised, burned creatures halted.

"Are all out?" asked Dr. Felder.

"Papa! Where is papa?" cried

Ethel, frantically. "Oh! Alex, papa is shut up there in that wing!"

Marlow stared in amazement.

"Hush! hush! deary," said Polly. "all of 'em has been taken out."

But here a wild cry arose, a cry that had been going on for some time, but which had been drowned in the tumult.

"Oh! for God's sake help me! Don't let me burn alive!"

In the sudden calm it could be heard.

"Help! Help! Help! For the love of God! Help!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

FROM a corner room in the topmost story came the cry. The crowd shuddered.

"Who is it? Who is it?" they shouted.

"It is Rollins," said one of the keepers, "he is burning."

"Rollins!" cried Dr. Felder. "And how came he there?"

"He was shut up there for bad conduct ever since Friday."

"Why was he not turned out?" asked the doctor, horrified. "And he is in your charge?"

"I did try to," said Andrews, sullenly. "But Jack had turned out Mad Tom, and as often as I tried to get to his door, he choked me back. I was glad to get away with my life."

"And Mad Tom?"

"He's still up there. He wouldn't

come, and whipped every keeper out who came near him. We hadn't force nor time to drag him away; the fire pressed us so hard."

"Must he die?" cried the crowd. "Must he die?"

The ghastly face pressed against the iron bars ceased not to scream and cry for help. And his yells were answered by Ethel's screams.

"Oh! poor papa! oh! poor, poor papa!"

"My God!" cried Dr. Felder. "This is awful! What can be done?"

But the firemen shook their heads. No ladders could reach up there because of the fire bursting out of the windows below, which would burn both ladder and man. Then those iron bars.

"A few blows could drive them in," said a keeper, "but no amount of strength could drive them out."

Ethel's wails rang in Marlow's ears and he listened anxiously to the discussion. All at once an idea occurred to him.

A great oak tree grew at the corner of the building, so near that already its leaves had shrivelled from the intense heat. Two of its mighty arms grew out parallel with each other and opposite Dorset's window, one about ten feet below the other and level with the window sill.

"I think help could reach him by means of that tree," said Marlow, and he explained his plan.

But the firemen scoffed at what would take the strength of a giant. Said they, "Who could do it?"

"I could," said Marlow, boldly. "'tis nothing to do. I have done as difficult things in a gymnasium. I would do it if you would help me."

"Let him try," said the chief. "Give your orders."

In a twinkling ladders were thrown against the tree. A fireman had secured a rope to the topmost branch about half way its length. Then Marlow, wearing a fireman's helmet and boots, started to follow him.

"Alex! Alex!" cried his mother, "don't! don't risk your precious life!"

"Shall he burn alive?" asked Marlow.

"Let the firemen rescue him. 'Tis their business to risk their lives. They are paid for it."

"I run but little risk," said Marlow, "and I can't see a fellow creature burn before my eyes."

"Don't risk your life for your wicked enemy!" cried his mother, passionately, while the people around stared. What did it all mean?

"Your wicked enemy!" she repeated.

Marlow turned and looked at Ethel, "I'll be back directly," said the matter-of-fact lover, and breaking loose from his mother, started up the ladder.

Mrs. Marlow was frantic, and would have followed him, had not Dr. Felder detained her.

"What does all this mean?" he asked, much perplexed. "Don't you want your husband saved?"

"He is not my husband, but my wicked enemy—and my son—my son

—" she broke down and gasped in wild despair.

Marlow had now run up the ladder and followed the fireman out on the limb; the other end of the rope was then securely tied round his body. And now with a mighty leap he shot through the air and dashed at the window. He struck the bars a terrific blow with his heavy boots, a blow that loosened them in their sockets, and that sent him flying back against the tree.

As his feet touched the lower limb he gave it a kick that sent him flying forward again towards the prison bars. Back and forth he went like a mighty pendulum, gaining greater and greater momentum with every spring.

The gaping crowd gazed in wonder at the flying acrobat.

The iron bars trembled, bent, and finally gave way, and Marlow stood on the window sill.

"Pull," said he to Dorset. "Pull, while I push."

By their united strength, the middle bars were forced from the sockets, and Marlow shouted to the man on the upper limb to slacken the rope so that he might enter.

Then another fireman ran up the ladder till he reached a third limb some distance below the lower of the two limbs; to him the first fireman threw the end of the loosened rope, and he fastened to it an extremely heavy rope which Marlow now in the cell began to draw up.

"Pull your bed to the window," said he to Dorset, who, taking in

what he was after, obeyed. The heavy rope was now wound around the bars that were still firm, then tightly fastened to the bedstead. Then the fireman on the ladder drew the rope tight over the limb and made it fast.

The wondering crowd below now saw a slender bridge made of a single rope. It looked not unlike Mahomet's bridge for the dead to pass over, only instead of being straight it ran at an inclined plane. The engines continued to play under the window to hold the fire in check so that the men might run down without being scorched.

"Now, Mr. Dorset," said Marlow, "see if you can't go down this rope hand over hand."

"I think," said Dorset, "I'd rather get astride of it and slide down."

"Just as you choose," said the other, "but I think you'll find it warm work."

With his usual obstinacy, Dorset insisted, and with Marlow's help got on the rope backwards. Marlow could have laughed had it not been such a serious matter to see him shooting down the inclined plane at fearful speed.

The skin came off Dorset's hands, and he felt on fire as he flew. Unable to check himself he struck against the tree with such force that it knocked him off the rope, and he fell heavily to the ground, and was taken up senseless.

Taking warning by Dorset's experience, Marlow now proceeded to let himself down from the window-sill

and cling to the rope, then working one hand over the other he slowly reached the limb, and from thence down the ladder to the ground and into the arms of his half frantic mother.

Ethel had disappeared, and a jealous pang smote Marlow's heart and made him deaf to the applause and congratulations which poured in on him from all sides.

"Brave fellow! Gallant fellow! Such dash and daring!"

"You have splendid nerve and courage," said the chief of the fire brigade. "You'd be a credit to the profession?"

Marlow smiled and shook his head. "It wasn't courage, it was simply desperation," he said. "But when a fellow's mother is in danger, he is not likely to count the costs."

And he gave her a loving squeeze as he stood with his arm about her, and Mrs. Marlow's cup was full to the brim.

"Oh! you are too modest! What about this last feat of strength?"

"Oh! I couldn't bear to hear that child's cry of distress," and at this the foam came off Mrs. Marlow's cup.

Marlow now turned anxiously to inquire: "Where is Mr. Dorset? Where is the man who fell off the rope?"

"He was taken this way," said one of the asylum officials, "to the edge of the crowd on the other side."

Marlow now followed the man, taking his unwilling mother with

him. "You have done enough. Let him alone," cried Mrs. Marlow, angrily, "perilling life and limb as you did."

"I must see him, mother," said Marlow calmly, making his way as best he could through the excited crowd who still poured upon him to congratulate and praise.

The crowd having surged towards the left wing, Dorset had been taken off to the edge of it, and, as it chanced, nearly opposite the right wing. The firemen had abandoned it to its fate, and had contented themselves with trying to save the central building, and had succeeded so far though it was badly scorched and blackened.

The roof of the wing had fallen in, and now the walls swayed and tottered, and the cry arose:

"Take care! Look out! The walls are cracking!"

The crowd surged back, and not too soon, for with a fearful crash the front wall fell in, and showed the poor riven interior of the building. The fire had raged hottest at the front, and the back wall was still standing, and clinging to it was part of the servants' staircase. It went up the distance of one flight. The rest of it had fallen when the corridor fell, dragged down with it. The stairs ran down to a door away in the back wall which was the servants' entrance to the wing.

Jeffreys had watched the whole episode of the rescue of Ethel and Dorset with mingled joy and rage. He did not dare go near the man he

had so cruelly injured, yet he could not keep away, and he was now hovering on the outskirts of the group, where Dorset lay in the arms of his daughter; when Mr. Vincent flitted up and mysteriously beckoned him away.

Mr. Vincent's madness seemed now to take a demoniacal turn. He beguiled Jeffreys round to the back of the house and before Jeffreys knew, the madman suddenly turned on him and felled him to the ground.

"Die! Die!" cried he, fiercely. "Die! and free the woman I love."

Jeffreys strove to rise, when the madman seized him by the throat and dragging him after him, fled into the burning building and up the staircase. Jeffreys screamed and fought, but the maniac was too strong for him.

"Look! Look!" cried the crowd on the other side.

Jeffreys screamed for help, but the lunatic strove to drown his cries with his louder yells while he dashed up the tottering stairs. In a second he had reached the top; from there down below was a burning mass. He seized the unfortunate man and hurled him with all his strength, and Jeffreys' screams of terror were drowned in his savage yells. Before the horror-stricken spectators could take it in, the wretched man was hurled upon the embers below.

"Die! die!" cried the lunatic, watching his writhings, and then burst into frightful laughter.

The alarm was quickly given and the hose of the nearest engine was

directed to the spot where the wretched Jeffreys fell. At sight of the water Mr. Vincent fled like a terrified cat, and the firemen rushing round the house, two of them ventured in and up the stairs, till opposite the hapless Jeffreys, on whom a stream of water poured, so that the fire in his vicinity was quickly extinguished. They then managed to hitch a sort of grappling hook into his clothes and haul him up, insensible and frightfully burned, but alive.

Mr. Dorset still continued unconscious, so Appler secured two carriages, into one of which Dorset was put, with Ethel and himself to take care of him, and driven back to the hotel in town. Marlow and his mother followed in the other.

But with the fascination that a fire brings, the crowd remained to watch the firemen at their work. The roof of the right wing fell in, but the central hall was saved, though its halls were badly scorched and defaced. But the moon set and the sun rose before the fire was finally quelled.

All night long the freed lunatics paced the park. In the fire they showed but little interest, being more frightened than anything else; even the most savage ones were for the time greatly subdued, though their keepers followed close upon their heels.

A cordon of military had been drawn up all round the park just within the walls. The men stood a few paces apart, the light gleaming

upon their bayonets, and these were a never-ending wonder to the poor creatures. Timidly they would creep up to a soldier, and standing mute and motionless, peer at him, touch him, gaze in awe at his arms, never once suspecting that the soldier was profoundly afraid of them.

But in spite of the care taken, many of them escaped, among others, Mr. Vincent. After seeing the wreck his rashness wrought, he fled away in great affright, and the asylum officials utterly failed to find him. Nor did they ever know that he was the cause of all their misfortunes.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ON their way into town, Mrs. Marlow, seated beside her son in the carriage, her head against his shoulder, his arm about her, told the story of her wrongs and troubles.

"But how came Dorset to kidnap you, and then be shut up in the asylum himself?"

"Dorset kidnap me? Dorset had nothing to do with it. It was that hypocritical wretch, Perkins. He and Patrick crept up the back stairs and were rifling my room when I entered."

"What? Impossible!"

"But they did, all the same. The large japan box in which I kept all my papers and all the United States bonds your father had invested his money in for me, I had taken from

the bank at Perkins' advice. He stated the bank would break soon and I might lose them, so I had them in my room and told him so, he seemed so interested. He hired Patrick to let him into the house. They were coming out of my room as I entered it."

"Great goodness! who would have thought it? He a thief!"

"He is worse than a thief. He, Perkins I mean, immediately muffled my head in a shawl he had worn around him, and he and Patrick bore me off down the back stairs."

"But tell me how you came to go to the asylum."

"Mr. Perkins first shut me up in his own house that night, telling his servants I was his crazy sister-in-law. The next night, with Patrick's assistance, I was put on the train—shut up in a Mann boudoir apartment—and hurried off to this asylum, where I was put in as his sister-in-law Mrs. Rollins—the vile wretch!" cried Mrs. Marlow, breaking off, full of indignation at the trick played upon her.

"He has been well punished," said Marlow; and he told her of the fate of both Perkins and his accomplice.

And Mrs. Marlow said that she was thankful that divine retribution had befallen them.

"But Dorset," said Marlow. "What had he to do with you?"

"Nothing with my imprisonment," said Mrs. Marlow. "For he, too, was the victim of his brother's greed. He, with the help of an accomplice, put Dorset in the asylum under the name of Mr. Rollins, and with black-

hearted malice, told the doctors we were husband and wife!"

"The wretch!" cried Marlow, indignantly.

"Wretch, indeed! my son," said his mother, much soothed by his anger; "and he furthermore told them, those idiots who call themselves doctors, that we were both demented, and that our dementia took the form of denying that we were aught to each other. And not till we acknowledged our relation to each other and consented to live together, should we be regarded as sane enough to come out."

Marlow breathed hard through his set teeth, too angry for words.

"Could anything be more insulting and ridiculous?"

"Nothing!" said he, through his teeth. "But Dorset?"

"Dorset was not only furious, but insulting in his denials. He is a low creature!"

Marlow winced.

"He became so rabid and violent that the asylum authorities shut him up till he could be civil to me."

"The dog!" muttered the angry Marlow under his breath.

"You may well say dog. Mad dog would be an appropriate epithet. The last time we met he was removed in a tantrum, and put in a straight jacket and shut up in that cell where you found him."

"But what were the doctors about that they could not see that you were sane?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Marlow in a scornful tone. "They were

either fools or knaves; most likely both."

On reaching the hotel, Mrs. Marlow was consigned to the care of a chambermaid and put to bed. And then Marlow went to hunt up Ethel.

She came out of her father's room to see him. The kind-hearted chambermaid had loaned her a pink calico in which she looked lovely, though tears were on her cheeks as she came out.

"My sweetest!" murmured Marlow as he clasped her to his breast, while the girl clung to him sobbing. "What ails my darling?" asked the lover tenderly.

"Poor papa! poor papa!" was all she could say.

"Is he much hurt?"

"Oh! dreadfully! And after all you risked for him! Oh! Alex, how good! how brave! how noble you are to risk your life for me and mine!"

"What would life be to me without you, Ethel?" he said. "Not worth the having!—You see, after all, my presentiment of trouble came true! Now tell me how you came into that horrid asylum."

"Mr. Jeffreys shut me up there till I would promise to marry him. But he told the doctors I was his crazy wife." And Ethel repeated all of Jeffreys' ingenious figments.

"The wretch! Well, he has been well punished!"

"Yes, indeed!" and she shuddered.

Here Ethel was called to her father and she hastened back into the room.

Left to himself, Marlow telegraphed

to Sarah to come on at once and bring a trunk full of his mother's and Ethel's clothes.

Sarah arrived that very evening, and the meeting between her and Mrs. Marlow was both pathetic and ludicrous. Afterwards she flew off to embrace Ethel, over whom she wept tears of joy, to the surprise of Appler who chanced to see her emerging from the room.

"If I hadn't have seen it, I couldn't have believed it!" mused the detective. "I didn't believe that that gaunt image could have produced moisture enough to make a tear!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BUT earlier in the day, before Sarah's arrival, Marlow, at Appler's entreaty, sought an interview with Dorset.

"While we are at it, let's clear up the whole mystery," said he. "And learn also where is your mother's box of bonds."

Thus urged, Marlow asked Ethel to request her father to see him. To her surprise Dorset refused.

"I don't wish to see him. I detest the whole lot of 'em. The old mother and all—she's an old cat and a she-devil, and the father was a swindler and cheated me out of all my money."

"Oh, papa! how can you talk so about a man to whom you owe so much—a man you owe your life to!"

"He is a paid fireman, and 'twas his business."

"He is nothing of the sort. It was a friendly act. He did it at my entreaty. And his mother kept begging him not to risk his life for his wicked enemy," she said.

"The old cat! Just like her!"

"And then, but for him, where would I be now? Either a vagrant on the street, or after that, burnt up in the fire."

"What are you talking about, child?" said Dorset.

"I mean," said Ethel, and she proceeded to give him an account of her life since he left her.

Dorset heard her in silent surprise, and when she finished he burst out fiercely:

"I wish it had been any one else but him!"

"Why?" said the girl, astonished. "You surely don't wish it was Jeffreys?"

"Don't speak of Jeffreys! the hound!"

"Don't, papa! don't! He has been awfully punished."

"And richly deserved it! I don't often pray, but I thank God for it. Treacherous dog! To bite the hand that fed him! I was a father to him rather than a guardian during all the years of his helpless minority, and he to turn upon me as he did!"

"What made him turn?"

I discovered his treachery with poor Jenny, and forbade him the house, not deeming him a fit associate for you. Then he, in revenge, with my beautiful brother, put me in the

asylum so that he might carry out his designs on you. And William wished to get what little property Marlow's daddy had left me. I have no doubt he got out administrator's papers on my estate to manage for you, and will pocket it all if he can. Jeffreys as good as told me so the day he came into my cell, and had the impudence to propose that he would get me released if I would consent to his marriage with you and make you marry him. I kicked him out of the window. I heard I nearly broke his leg. I only wish it had been his back or neck."

Dorset was silent for a moment from excessive passion, then his fiery temper rallied again.

"And this Marlow fellow. You say he befriended you when that she-devil turned you out?"

"Nobody could have been kinder," said Ethel, "and——" she stopped short, colouring.

"Humph!" said Dorset, eyeing the rising colour suspiciously. "And none more affectionate, I suspect."

Ethel's head drooped.

"He was very kind," she said, feeling embarrassed.

"Do you love this man, Ethel?" asked Dorset, shortly.

"Oh, papa! papa!" the burning face dropped into her hands.

"My poor girl," said Dorset, with unwonted gentleness: "I am all the mother you have ever known, and God knows I have tried to do my duty by you."

"Yes, dear papa, dear papa."

"And Marlow—does he love you?"

"Oh, yes!" with surprise that he should ask such a question.

"Has he told you so?"

"Often, often."

"And wants to marry you?"

"Of course. What else would he do?"

Dorset closed his eyes, and was silent awhile. At last he said, "I wish it had been someone else."

"Why, papa?"

"Because if I give you to him, I lose my girl—and—and—to give her up——" Here a paroxysm of pain stopped him.

Ethel kissed the rugged face, on which the cold sweat stood in great drops. At last the pain ceased, and Dorset, opening his eyes, looked on her with a tender smile.

"So like your mother! So like your mother! Well," he muttered, "the separation may be imminent." But the man's obstinacy clung to him. "I hate this Marlow," he went on, doggedly, "and always hated him!"

"Does he hate you, papa?"

"He don't love me," said Dorset, grimly. "There has been no love lost among us for a long time, and why he befriended you I can't imagine."

"Did he know that you hated him?"

"Certainly, child. It was no secret. Go send him here to me; I want to question him, while I have strength."

"The doctors say ——" began Ethel.

"D—the doctors! Don't ever say doctor to me again. I've had enough

of them crammed down my throat lately. If ever I get off this bed, if I don't prosecute the last rascally kidnapper of them!"

Fearing a fresh outburst, Ethel hurried off, and soon returned with Marlow.

"Leave us, Ethel," said her father.

The girl obeyed, going into the next room, but left the door ajar, in case she was needed.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"My daughter has been telling me that you have been making love to her in my absence," said Dorset, roughly.

"So I did," said Marlow, taken rather by surprise. "I found her homeless on the street——"

"Yes, yes, I know—that old she-devil! I'll settle with her when I get back."

"I took her home," continued Marlow, "and treated her just like my own sister."

"Oh! Oh!"

"At first. When my feelings deepened, I told her so. But I treated her with the greatest respect—I wished to make her my wife."

"And why didn't you, instead of keeping her in that suspicious position?"

"Because," said Marlow, "every day I hoped to clear up the mystery concerning my mother's abduction.

The detective's suspicions pointed to you."

"To me?"

"To you."

"On what grounds, pray?"

"That, imagining yourself swindled by my father, you had abducted her till she would consent to give up the bonds you claimed, and your disappearance at the same time gave colour to the theory. So I waited till I could find my mother."

"And me?" asked Dorset, derisively.

"It was a hard thing, I admit, to think of you as in any way connected with me. But my love for your daughter conquered."

"Indeed!"

Dorset was silent for a moment, then he said: "Harkee, young man, I'm no religious man, but God so do to you as you have done to my girl!"

"Amen!" said Marlow, promptly. "And now that I have satisfied you, will you please tell me how you came in the asylum?"

"My precious brother entrapped me there. Jeffreys helped him, so that Jeffreys could get my girl, and William what little property I had left. Curse him! If I ever get off this bed I'll make him smart!"

"He has been punished already," and Marlow told of Mr. Perkins' condition.

"I'm glad of it," cried Dorset, savagely. "I'm glad of it! Listen, young man, and if I never get well—and sometimes I feel as if I won't—go to William Perkins, and tell him

my dying curse rests on him for all he did to me!—curse him!——" he broke off and gasped with pain.

Ethel hurried in. "Papa! papa! You mustn't talk so."

"Go, go," she said to Marlow. "Leave him now," and Marlow obeyed, glad to get away.

With some difficulty she quieted Dorset, and giving him an opiate, he fell asleep.

Marlow, in the meantime, was receiving a call from Dr. Felder. That gentleman was endeavouring to explain matters to him. Dr. Felder was deeply mortified to find that he had been the dupe of two designing, unscrupulous men.

"Mr. Marlow," said he, "if you had the charge of an asylum and saw how we were forced to depend on the statements of the friends of the patients, for the clew to their insanity, you would understand our mistake on this occasion. And these tales were so skilfully told, and both parties played so entirely into the hands of cunning captors (I assure you they were often as excited as the *bonâ fide* lunatics), if you could have seen them you would not have blamed us."

"And what do you say of Miss Dorset?" asked Marlow, sceptically.

"Miss Dorset had been there but a week; too short a time to judge of a patient's case."

"Dr. Felder," said Marlow, "you may be honest, but I confess I am in no state at present to appreciate your statement. I had intended prosecuting you for false imprisonment,

but I will let the matter lie over for the present, principally because I dislike publicity."

And so they parted. As he left Ethel entered.

"Papa is asleep," she said. "And—oh, Alex, I never knew all till to day. I never dreamed that all the time you were caring for me, you and papa were bitter enemies, and you had cause to think he had done you a dreadful wrong."

"I did not wish you to know it, my darling. I am sorry you know it now. But it only shows how powerful were your attractions to make me forget all my ill feelings."

"Oh! how good, how noble you are!" cried the girl. "Oh! my Sir Galahad! my Sir Galahad!"

"Don't! don't! A poor clerk!"

"With a knightly soul!" cried she, her eyes sparkling.

"With a heart that loves you to its very core," said Marlow.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SARAH having come and put her to rights, Mrs. Marlow was anxious to go home. But Marlow would not consent to leave Ethel alone among strangers, with her father so ill.

Mrs. Marlow was a high-tempered woman and a very jealous one, and she was cut to the heart that at a time like this, when she had just come through great tribulations, her

son should give the daughter of her enemy precedence.

"I never wanted a daughter-in-law, and certainly not Dorset's daughter," said she to Sarah.

"But la! mum," said Sarah, "she is such a pretty dear, and so innocent! you can't help but love her if you know her, and spoil her too."

This was too much.

"Leave the room," said Mrs. Marlow, shortly, and Sarah departed in a huff.

"I shall not dance attendance on the Dorsets," said Mrs. Marlow, to herself; "if Alex is so lost to all natural affection and self-respect as to do so. And to-morrow morning I leave here for home. He can do as he likes."

But by next morning Dorset had sunk so rapidly that even he saw that his hours were numbered, and he sent for Marlow.

"I cannot conceal it from myself that I am going fast," he said, "and then my poor girl will be left alone in the world. If you really mean to do the honest thing by her, marry her by my bedside so that I can leave her with an easy mind."

"I am more than willing," said Marlow. "What does Ethel say?"

"Call her. My girl," said Dorset as she entered, "I'm going fast—"

"Oh, papa! papa!"

"Be quiet and listen. When I am gone there will be no one to take care of you—." He stopped, gasping for breath.

"But me," said Marlow, finishing the sentence. "And he wants you to

give me the legal right. Will you marry me now?" and he put his arm around her and drew the weeping girl to him.

"I've been a rough father, my girl," said Dorset, speaking in broken gasps.

"Oh, no! Oh, no! a most tender one!"

"But there's never been a more anxious, loving one. And I want to tell your precious mother when I meet her that I have left you in safe hands. I can't die easy leaving you so unprotected and so young and helpless. Are you willing?"

"It is so dreadful! at such a time!" she sobbed.

"Never mind the time. Are you willing to marry him? Do you love him?"

"Who—Alex?"

She turned her eyes upon him full of innocent affection, and Marlow stooped and pressed his lips to hers.

"That settles it," said Dorset. "Now, young man, go and fetch the parson. I never thought to like you living as much as I do dying."

Marlow turned to leave the room.

"Ethel," said he from the door, "let me speak with you one minute. Ethel," said he anxiously, "you are willing to marry me? You are willing to marry me? You are willing to be my wife?"

"If papa wishes it."

He drew her into his arms. "I love you with all my heart and soul. Tell me you love me."

"I love only you and papa. And

when he is gone," cried she, weeping, "you will be all I love on earth!" and she hid her face on his breast.

"My darling! My darling! You are all the world to me now." He strained her to him and kissed her again and again.

The door had gotten ajar, and Dorset had witnessed the whole affair.

"Now my mind is easy," he thought. "If there is any difference he loves her the most. She is so childish, so innocent. She can't understand a man's love—just like her mother before her. Strange that those are the women that men go mad over! That grave young fellow will bill and coo there till I die."

"Ethel," he called, and Marlow tore himself away.

He amazed Appler by informing him what he contemplated, and dispatched him for the license and the minister; then he went to inform his mother.

Mrs. Marlow was scandalized at such a proceeding; she refused her consent and refused to sanction it with her presence.

"Oh, mother!" cried Marlow, as he rose to leave her, "and I anticipated such joy when we met!"

"So did I," cried his mother, passionately, "and I find an interloper in my place!"

"Not an interloper! I don't regard her as a mother. I thought to make you richer by a child."

"I want no other, and certainly not Dorset's daughter."

She refused to be present, and

Marlow left her in bitterness of heart.

"Don't mind her, Master Alex," said Sarah; "she's gone through so much 'tis enough to drive her wild."

"True," said Marlow, but he was a very heavy-hearted bridegroom.

The wedding was sad enough; the dying man, the little weeping bride, the grave groom, and Appler and Sarah, rather hard-looking witnesses, made it look much like a funeral.

Just as the ceremony began the door opened, and Mrs. Marlow entered; her conscience had smitten her and forced her to come, but it could drive her no farther than the door. There she stood till the ceremony ended, and then, without a word, returned to her own room, the prey of jealous anguish.

Dorset stifled his groans till the services ended, then he said in short gasps, "Again I say, God do to you as you do to her."

"Amen," said the young fellow, quietly, as he drew his weeping wife to his breast.

That night Dorset died, and Marlow knew that he was all the world to the orphan.

The funeral was over, and they had returned to the hotel. Marlow had comforted his girl wife as best he could, and had left her to go and

make arrangements for their return home.

Mrs. Marlow sat alone in her room; she had refused to go to the funeral, and she sat moodily brooding over her loss. She was alone in the world; this interloper had come between her and her son.

The door opened, and a slender figure, with a tear-stained face entered. Mrs. Marlow eyed her stonily, and the girl advanced till she stood before her.

"I am all alone in the world," said a sobbing voice. "All alone but for Alex. I have no mother. Oh, won't you be my mother too?"

She knelt at Mrs. Marlow's feet, and hid her face in her lap.

"I have never known a mother," said the sobbing voice. "It must be so sweet to have a mother. Won't you take me along with Alex? Won't you be my mother too? I am so lonely—so lonely!"

Mrs. Marlow was touched, melted; her jealous anger vanished. She lifted the tear-stained face and kissed it. And Ethel immediately clung about her neck, and laid her face on her breast.

"Mother, mother," she said, "call me your little daughter."

"My little daughter," said Mrs. Marlow, vanquished. "My dear little daughter!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

WHEN Marlow returned he searched in vain for his wife. In his alarm he ventured into his mother's room. There sat Ethel on his mother's lap, tenderly caressing her, and smiling through her tears.

"This is my mother," she said, putting her arms around Mrs. Marlow's neck, as the young man stared, "my mother as well as yours. I shall always love you for giving me a mother."

"And I, for giving me a daughter," said Mrs. Marlow, who could do a graceful thing when she chose.

Marlow dropped on his knees beside the chair, and put his arms about both. "This is all my world," he said.

"And mine," said his girl wife, passing her other arm about his neck.

"And mine," said the happy mother, encircling them both in her arms.

On their return home, Marlow got out a search warrant and he and Appler went to Mr. Perkins' house to look for Mrs. Marlow's bonds, and all of Dorset's property which he had feloniously appropriated.

Mr. Perkins sat by the side of a closet, over which he kept watch and ward, drumming on the arms of his chair, and muttering:

"My sin has found me out! My sin has found me out!"

And though he had no further use

for his ill-gotten gains, he shrieked and screamed as the detective forced open the closet and searched it.

On the shelves were many japan boxes. One of them proved to be Mrs. Marlow's, with her bonds in it. In others were found the title deeds to much property that Dorset had owned in his wife's name, and which Mr. Perkins had appropriated as guardian for Ethel.

"Robbers! Thieves!" cried Mr. Perkins, wringing his hands as they searched the boxes.

"This is your brother's property," said Appler. "What do you want with it?"

"My sin has found me out!" mumbled the old man.

Marlow's pity died in anger as he thought of all the sufferings his insatiable greed had caused.

"Your brother is dead," he said, sternly. "He was killed in escaping from that madhouse where you shut him up."

"Dead!" screamed Mr. Perkins. "Dead! dead! Oh! my sin! my sin!" He cowered in his chair, groaning.

At last he broke into a little gibbering laugh that made the men shudder—his remaining mind had given way under the shock.

Mr. Perkins ended his days in the asylum to which he had consigned his brother, and which Dr. Felder built up again, and was very careful as to whom he received in it.

Mr. Vincent fled away on that fateful night and made his way to New York, and on board a steamer, where

he hid away. When found, he was forced to work his passage to Europe. The buffetings did him good; his mind returned as suddenly as it had left him. He remembered but little about his passion for Ethel, and nothing concerning his firing the asylum.

Jeffreys recovered, but such a frightful, disfigured creature that no one could look on him without shuddering. His life is one long, living death.

The ill-fated bonds which had been such a bone of contention between the Marlows and Dorsets, Mrs. Marlow now handed over to her son.

"Whatever rights I had I resign to you. Now you and Ethel settle it between you."

"Why, I belong to him as well as the bonds," said Ethel, smiling.

"And you own me body and soul," said Marlow, laughing.

"I think you are both in a bad way," said the mother, "but I am glad to see it. I hope you will never recover."

And they never did.

But the most wonderful event was that Appler became captivated with Sarah. He dated his passion from the day he saw her shed a tear.

At first, Sarah scoffed and flouted him. But Appler courted systematically. Once a month he made an offer in the same methodical way that one would settle accounts, and by Christmas, when the accounts of the year are wound up, Sarah yielded.

This strange couple got on in the most harmonious manner by making it a rule to tell each other their faults and weaknesses. These unpalatable truths they received like a wholesome tonic, bitter but healthy.

THE END.

Stirling, August 1888.

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